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THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME



First Magazine
Publication of

**SATAN'S
SERVANTS**

by ROBERT BLOCH

●
**CROSS OF
FIRE**

by LESTER DEL REY

●
Off-Trail Short Novel

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THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

Volume 5

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While the greatest diligence has been used to ascertain the owners of rights, and to secure necessary permissions, the editor and publisher wish to offer their apologies in any possible case of accidental intrusions.

Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Editor's Page

At the Lunacon-Eastercon this year (the annual convention for lovers of fantasy and science fiction, sponsored by New York's Lunarian Society), where I was Guest of Honor, there was continuing discussion of what is referred to as the "New Wave" or "New Thing" in science fiction. Offhand, you might assume that this is entirely outside the orbit of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, but this is not the case at all. From the very beginning, we have run subtitles under the word "Horror" on our covers, to indicate that this is not a magazine narrowly confined to one type of story only. Sometimes this subhead has read "Strange Tales and Science Fiction", sometimes "and Strange Stories," but for the most part we have rested with the subhead you see now: "The Bizarre, The Gruesome, The Frightening". And a sizeable fraction of the better wrought stories that have come from the most notable practitioners of the New Wave can certainly be called bizarre or gruesome or frightening and some of them all three.

One of the questions that one of the prominent science fiction authors on one of the panel discussions, Saturday April 12, tossed right back to members of the audience who asked questions about the New Wave was: "What's new about it?"

I think Anne McCaffery asked a very pointed question there, and one worth considering—not because (as

some of the audience, and perhaps McCaffery herself, seemed to consider) asking this question amounts to a put-down, but rather that it is worth thinking about just what is new about the New Wave. (What's new about a New Year?) What appears to be new about any approach to fiction, or any type of fiction, may be new to me or to you simply because neither of us have read anything quite like it before. Yet, a person more widely read than either of us might be able to show that this sort of thing has been done before, and quite a number of years back. at that.

In the February 1969 issue of the very literate British fan magazine, *SPECULATION*, Sam Moskowitz points out that a number of elements to be found in stories presented as examples of the New Wave are, indeed, anything but new. There is nothing new about presenting science fiction in the form of a diary or journal; about telling a story in telegrams, memos, or newspaper clippings; or stream-of-consciousness; or the liberal use of Anglo-Saxon four-letter words; or surrealism in prose; or stories told in the second person . . . and the list could very possibly be continued. No matter what seemingly novel idea may come to you or to me as a new way of writing or presenting a science fiction tale, the odds are against us: the particular thing has been done before. Yet, in

another respect, the odds may be in our favor: only a very small fraction of those who read this story may have encountered the earlier examples of it.

But there is another aspect of "newness" in fiction as a whole, and of science fiction in particular: *making it new*. An experiment in story writing may be nothing more than that—a gimmick presented for its own sake, under the author's impression that this particular twist has never been done before. The trouble with this is that even if the author *has* come up with something new, the results may not be of any particular worth. When the main attention is on the writing gimmick, then the author is very likely to pour some pretty musty old wine into the new wine-skin—not wine properly aged, but over-aged and far from satisfactory.

But when an author experiments simply because he has what he believes to be a new story, and finds that the more or less conventional ways of writing it just do not seem to be adequate, so that any literary experiments are *ex post facto*, rather than *a priori*, then there's a very reasonable chance of all-around success. Then it does not matter in the least whether what the author believes to be a new gimmick was done by FitzJames O'Brien a hundred years ago, or by Guillaume Apollinaire back in 1910 (two specific references that Moskowitz makes) because when the results of our present-day author turn out to be original, the origin is no longer important. It's all the same whether the author knowingly borrowed from an earlier example, or re-discovered something under the

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impression of having made a new discovery.

There's the true story of an illiterate farmhand who came to a school teacher with some ideas that had come to him. The fellow was a genius; he had re-discovered logarithms on his own, without ever having been taught any mathematics above the simplest addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Hugo Gernsback did not invent science fiction, nor was he the first to publish science fiction in magazine form. What *was* new about *AMAZING STORIES*, as I noted in my speech on April 13, was that not only was this the first magazine to be entirely devoted to science fiction, but that Mr. Gernsback was trying to give a specific direction to science fiction. He had to start out with reprinting many of the older, and some of them classic, stories; but what he hoped to do was to attract scientists into writing for the magazine—scientists who would extrapolate ideas along the lines of their specialties, speculate on the possibilities opened up if these things happened, and put these extrapolations and speculations into the form of adventure stories.

Outside of the single fact that Jules Verne was not a working scientist, that is exactly what Verne was doing in most of his fiction. So Gernsback's New Thing was not new in the sense of absolute originality, but his *AMAZING STORIES* was an attempt to "make it new".

It did not work out as he had hoped, if for no other reasons than that (a) very few scientists were willing to try to write this sort of story at all—this sort of fiction was hardly

considered respectable in 1926 (b) most of the few who were willing insisted that the stories be published under pen-names—which undermined a major part of Gernsback's effort: he wanted the "authority" of the names of well-known scientists on the new stories he ran (c) of the few who were willing, most had very modest talents for writing fiction, to put the matter charitably.

Since then, we have seen some very fine stories that are actually in the Gernsback tradition, written by an author who proved to be many-talented and who has become a highly respected scientist: Dr. Isaac Asimov. It does not matter today that if, as Lester del Rey has noted, humanoid-design robots are unlikely to come about, after all. The Asimov-type robot was a reasonable extrapolation upon what was known about servo-mechanisms back in the early forties; and the stories are just as readable as the best of Jules Verne today—so it never really matters if the science-extrapolation in a science fiction tale has become obsolete by the time you read it, or go back to re-read it.

Nor does it matter if the story which seems to be brand new in its impact turns out to be very similar in many respects to other stories which were written twenty to a hundred or so years ago. If the author has made it new, then there is a newness which will remain. So there is, indeed, a definite measure of justification for calling a certain area of fiction within the much larger area we call science fiction "New Wave" (or, as some prefer: speculation fiction).

(Turn to page 116)

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Satan's Servants

by Robert Bloch

(author of *The Faceless God*)

(Together with notes and commentary by
H. P. LOVECRAFT)

We asked ROBERT BLOCH if he could supplement the introduction to this story with a few details about his earlier attempts, successful or otherwise, and he replied with encouraging promptness and detail. Since some of the matter duplicates material in the introduction (I'm not sure he understood that we intended to reprint it, too) I've made a few deletions, as well as omitting a few lesser details for considerations of space, etc. These are indicated by ellipses. Mr. Bloch deposeseth:

"To the best of my recollection I began submitting short pieces to Farnsworth Wright late in 1933; they were rejected (and Wrightly so) on the ground that narrative structure was weak. H. P. Lovecraft, who had first suggested I try my hand at short stories, read these early efforts and encouraged me, and it was he who told me to send some of the rejections to William L. Crawford. Crawford was then publishing irregularly-scheduled issues of semi-professional fantasy magazines, and on one of these—*MARVEL TALES*—I made my debut with *Lilies*, in the winter of 1934. (1933/1934, RAWL). Another story, *The Madness of Lucian Gray*, was mislaid by Crawford and never discovered; from what I can recall of the tale, its loss was posterity's gain. In the December 1934 issue of *THE FANTASY FAN*, I was represented by *The Laughter of a Ghoul*, a little horror in every sense of the word, and shortly thereafter Crawford printed *The Black Lotus* in his Winter 1935 issue of *UNUSUAL STORIES*. I received no payment for these efforts, and

deserved none, although *The Black Lotus* has subsequently seen reprinting several times in professional publications.

"Meanwhile, I kept trying to interest Farnsworth Wright in such items as *The Touch of a Corpse*—which he wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole—and began the first draft of *Satan's Servants* . . . Wright rejected the earliest version because it relied too heavily on atmosphere—like the Chicago stockyards, or Los Angeles on a smoggy day . . .

"It must be remembered that during this period (1933-34) I was still a high school student, and much of my extra-curricular activity centered on dramatics; I wrote and appeared in skits and playlets, went the usual route of participation in minstrel shows and the annual senior plays. But when I graduated in June, 1934, I acquired a second-hand typewriter and devoted my full time to short stories. Six weeks later, I sold Wright *The Secret in the Tomb*, and followed it quickly with *The Feast in the Abbey*. That fall I also sold *The Suicide in the Study* and *The Shambler from the Stars*.

"*The Feast in the Abbey* appeared in the January 1935 issue of *WEIRD TALES* . . . and I was finally a professionally-published writer at the advanced age of 17. By the time the fanzines got around to actually printing *The Laughter of a Ghoul* and *The Black Lotus* I was a seasoned old pro, with four *WEIRD TALES* acceptances, and during 1935 I began turning out many of the stories which *WEIRD TALES* ran in '36. I sometimes received requests for revisions, but few outright rejections—and from 1937 on I was usually selling my first-draft submissions. But the encouragement of Lovecraft, Wright, and Derleth was the vital ingredient; without this, I probably would have given up the ghost, to say nothing of the ghouls and zombies."

66 solo appearances by Robert Bloch in *WEIRD TALES* followed *The Feast in the Abbey*, the final one being *Lucy Comes to Stay*, in the January 1952 issue; there were also collaborations with Nathan Hinden, Jim Kjelgard, and Henry Kuttner. As those in the know know, Bloch retired from authorship to become a full time science fiction fan, but now and then writes a novel or film script, such as *Psycho*, for exercise.

Introduction by Robert Bloch

Some while ago a statement appeared to the effect that there were "no more unpublished Lovecraft stories or collaborations." While lamenting this pronouncement, I recalled that early in 1935 I had written and submitted a story entitled *Satan's Servants*, which was rejected by Farnsworth Wright, then editor of *Weird Tales* on the grounds that the plot-structure was too flimsy for the extended length of the narrative.

At that time I was in constant correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft, and we

frequently exchanged current manuscripts for suggestions and critical comment. Accordingly, I sent him my rejected story; and because the tale had a New England locale I made bold to ask if he would be interested in collaborating with me on a revision.

As the excerpts from his letter below will indicate, he refused a full-dress collaborative effort, but my manuscript came back copiously annotated and corrected, together with a lengthy and exhaustive list of suggestions for revision.

I placed the story in my files, fully intending to get at a new version when the time was right. Through the years the pages literally mouldered; I exhumed them from time to time when re-sorting material, moving, weeding out deadwood, and reviewing unpublished stories and outlines. Some years ago I utilized the name of the principal character, "Gideon Godfrey" when writing a tale in a modern setting. But *Satan's Servants* gathered dust for fourteen long years until I fell to musing upon the sorry fact that there would be no more Lovecraft stories or stories inspired, revised, or partially-written.

Acting on impulse, I invaded the elephants' graveyard at the bottom of my bureau and there, amidst a welter of outlines, novel fragments, radio scripts and assorted incunabula, I managed to disinter the yellowed pages of the original manuscript, with the marginalia in HPL's familiar crabbed hand. I also unearthed Lovecraft's lengthy letter in which he discussed the project of revision.

I determined to revise the tale forthwith, and spoke of my determination to August Derleth, Lovecraft's biographer, who suggested that I revise the story especially for the *Arkham Sampler*, and include a portion of the correspondence, plus some of the more pertinent critical commentary in the form of footnotes to the text of the tale. Excerpts from HPL's letter accordingly follow, and the notes will be found at the conclusion of the story.

There is much to interest the student of Lovecraft's work here; his comments mirror perfectly his own precise and erudite approach to his material. From the purely personal standpoint, I was often fascinated during the process of revision by the way in which certain interpolated sentences or phrases of Lovecraft's seemed to dovetail with my own work—for in 1935 I was quite consciously a disciple of what has since come to be known as the "Lovecraft school" of weird fiction. I doubt greatly if even the self-professed "Lovecraft scholar" can pick out his actual verbal contributions to the finished tale; most of the passages which would be identified as "pure Lovecraft" are my work; all of the sentences and bridges he added are of an incidental nature and merely supplement the text. Certain major suggestions for plot-revision have been incorporated, but these in turn have been re-edited by a third party--myself, 1949 edition. For the Robert Bloch of 1935, as I painfully discovered during this revision process, is as dead as Howard Phillips Lovecraft is today. Peace to their mutual ashes!

There remains only to add that there is a possibility of one more exhumation from the past. In 1935 I wrote and published *The Shambler from the Stars*, dedicated to HPL. A year or so later, HPL wrote a sequel, *The Haunter*

of the Dark, dedicated to me. In my story I used him as a character and in his story he used me. Subsequently I suggested writing a third story to complete the trilogy, taking up where he left off. This tale, *The Shadow in the Steeple*, elicited considerable enthusiasm from Lovecraft when I outlined it to him in a letter. He urged me to write it, but I deferred. It may be that at some future date, I shall complete the project.

If not, then this is definitely to my knowledge the last story in which Lovecraft conceivably had a hand. Portions of his letter follow; then the tale itself. I now surrender my pen to Howard Phillip Lovecraft, who writes:

"And now let me congratulate you most sincerely on the excellence of *Satan's Servants*-which I read with keen pleasure and unflagging interest . . . regarding the future treatment of the story-it certainly deserves touching up and further submission for publication.

"I have taken the liberty to add some marginal notes and make some changes which seemed necessary from an historical and geographical standpoint. Most of these explain themselves.

"Roodsford had to be outside the boundaries of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, since the strict oversight prevailing within that rigid theocratic unit would never have suffered such a place to exist. Also-the location had to be shifted to some point on the coast where the settlement was not thick. Early New England was colonized with a rush so that by 1690 the whole coastal region was dotted with thriving towns and almost continuous farmsteads. Two generations of settled life had almost removed every trace of the wilderness aspect and (after King Philip's War in 1675-6) Indians were rarely seen.

"The only place on the coast where a village could exist relatively unknown would be Maine-whose connexion with Mass. did not begin until 1663, and which was not an actual part of that province until July, 1690. I have decided to locate Roodsford between York and Wells if that is agreeable to you. Enclosed is a map of New England (which you can keep) shewing the new position. That any wilderness journey would have to start from Portsmouth and not Boston or Salem would be obvious from an inspection of this chart.

"The narration itself is splendidly vivid-my only criticism having to do with Gideon's *excessively quick* discovery of the nature and horrors of Roodsford. It would be much more powerful to have this revelation come with hideous *gradualness* after days of hellish *suspicion* . . .

"Be very careful when representing archaic language-for the usual tendency is to overshoot the mark and make the diction *too* ancient. Study the spelling in actual specimens of 17th century printing. I've made a few changes in your principal sample on page 1. Regarding Governor Phipps-he was no witchfinder prior to 1692, but a voyager and soldier of fortune whose career makes interesting reading . . .

"At the end of the story I've brought up the point of whether you ought to have the action take place before or after the 1692-3 Salem affair. Certainly it ought to be *afterward* if you wish to convey the idea that this Roodsford business ended witchcraft in New England. By the way-the leading wizard

in the Salem trouble, Rev. George Burroughs, came down from Wells, Maine, near the relocated site of Roodsford. You can make something of that, perhaps, if you wished . . .

"Now as to the idea of collaboration--this tale really tempts me more than any other I've seen lately, but I honestly don't believe I could undertake any collaboration job at all at this time . . .

"Under any circumstances collaboration is a harder task than original writing, and the only possible justification is that of wishing some idea to be properly developed which otherwise couldn't be. Now in the case of *Satan's Servants* I feel certain you can develop the tale yourself just as well as I could--hence don't feel guilty in suggesting that you try it. During recent months I have had to place a complete veto--sheer self-defense--on all collaboration projects . . . when so many stories of my own are veritably howling to be written.

"But as I said before, in this case I feel sure I'm not doing the story any harm by staying out of it. It's great stuff, and you can polish it up just as well as anybody else could. The descriptions of the Sabbath are splendid and the climax is magnificent. The primary need is to make the traveller's introduction to the horrors subtler and more gradual . . .

"Incidentally, I feel rather akin to Gideon since I have an actual line of Godfrey ancestry. On October 29, 1732, my ancestor Newman Perkins (b. 1711) was married to Mehitabel, daughter of John Godfrey of S. Kingstown, R. I. We may well assume John to be Gideon's brother or nephew or cousin!

—H. P. Lovecraft."

"Satan's prevalencie of this Age is most clear in the marvellous number of Witches abounding in all places. Now hundreds are discovered in one Shire; and, if Fame deceives us not, in a village of Fourteen Houses in the North, are found so many of this Damned Brood . . ."

—Cotton Mather

I

IT WAS QUITE evident that the inhabitants of Roodsford (1) did not come over in the *Mayflower* or any of her sister ships; that, indeed, they had not sailed from an English port at all. Nor is there a known and reputable record of their coming to that barren region of the north coast. They simply entered the land unnoticed and without charter, permission or proviso, set up their simple dwellings.

They were let alone because their haven lay beyond the Massachusetts Bay's officious reach—in Maine, where the Puritan's autocratic hand did not descend till 1663. The first mention of the place occurs in the *Chronicles of Captain Elias Godworthy, His Trips & Explorations upon the Continent of North America*, printed by Haverstock in London, in 1672. (2) He describes it as "a fishing Towne of fourteen Houses, the Inhabitants of which wear doleful, ungodly Look in Keeping with Their meagre Dwellings. (3)

The good Captain had made but a cursory inspection whilst passing up the coast in a sloop bound for Nova Scotian shores, and evidently no one cared to follow up his testimony, for the name of Roodsford does not recur in Colonial history until the atrocious witchcraft days of '92. Then came investigation with a vengeance.

So for a time the people and the ways of Roodsford were to the outer world very largely unknown. Even in Portsmouth they were only an unsavoury legend, while at York all mention of them was avoided by common consent.

How Gideon Godfrey of Boston gleaned his story is as yet undetermined. Perhaps he had heard some of the queer hints and furtive, whispered rumors circulated by the savages or traders (4) who made occasional trips down the coast with supplied of furs, or perhaps something had come out in the closer surveys of Maine which accompanied its fusion with the Massachusetts Bay in 1690. Whatever the source, Gideon must have known or suspected a great deal—for only the most urgent contingency could have caused this man of God to do what he subsequently did.

In the early autumn of 1693 he moved lock, stock and barrel to a dirty little village of foreigners, in a barren wilderness seventy miles up the coast as the crow flies and fully ten miles more by the winding, ferry-broken land route. He left behind him a wife, two children, and a goodly Boston pulpit to ride, uninvited and unannounced, to Roodsford.

Gideon was a pillar of the Church. His fiery sermons, fanatical devotion to the cause of the Puritans, and stoical stamina under the rigors and hardships of a new land were belied, however, in his ascetic countenance and asthenic physique, which gave him the outward appearance of a gangling parson. Only in his fiery, unflinching eyes was there a hint of the ardour which made him the veritable embodiment of the Orthodox Church of the Massachusetts Bay (5) as he rode into the wilderness to do battle with the heathen.

His going caused much comment. Although he had gained the

approval of his superiors, most folk deemed it a rash venture. Gideon, the wise ones declared, was a fool. And in the minds of the elders there was more of apprehension than approbation.

Nevertheless, Gideon Godfrey left Boston on horseback one morning in late September, 1693, amidst the lamentations of friends and family. Before departure he had outlined his route of travel to the Pasquantog sachems who knew something of the region through which he would journey. His plan was to ride to Newbury and spend the night, then go on to Portsmouth the following day before turning west. After that, save for a brief pause at the little village of York, Gideon would be riding straight through the unblazed forest byways feared by settlers and savages alike.

When Gideon thus charted his journey, the Indians shook their heads. Strange horror, they whispered, crept through those ancient woods and leered down from the brooding hills. They warned him of the perils of riding alone, or venturing into certain secluded forest byways after the coming of night. They counseled him to keep to the coast and stay within a circle of fire if forced to stop between towns betwixt dusk and dawn.

Gideon was most eager to secure more details concerning his destination, but when he asked the Pasquantogs what they knew of Roodsford they shook their heads and pretended not to understand his questionings. Wakimis, the elder sachem, begged him to abandon his journey, and finally proffered the services of two guides who would travel on foot.

Thus they started out, and for the first two days their schedule was maintained with fair ease—Newbury was reached, then Portsmouth, then York.

The next day they plunged at dawn into an unknown world. There was a blue mist over the western hills and a grey fog on the sea. The chill of autumn lay light upon the air, and russet leaves would soon carpet the ground (6). After Kittery and York were left behind they turned inland, though the guides again echoed the warnings of Wakimis when they contemplated the blackly wooded route before them. The sea was soon lost to view, and the booming voice of its waters was stilled in their ears.

They journeyed now in forest twilight. Blue shadows hung athwart the twisted pathway, or lurked beside the boles of immemorially ancient trees. Strange rustlings echoed from far-off tangled byways, bringing to Gideon's mind the sachem's tales of fabled presences in the forest. Once there came the remote evil laughter of a trickling brook, whereat the

guides drew back, and Gideon's horse whinnied piteously; but Godfrey himself gave no sign of having heard.

Their way led them through a wood forever denser, yet with deceptive suggestions of branching paths which gave rise to temporary loss of bearings. Again and again time was lost, till at length Gideon's carefully arranged daylight travelling schedule seemed likely to prove of no avail. (7)

Fording a swiftly-charging stream shortly after midday, they came upon a still more forbidding expanse of forest where the path was merely a vague outline in shrouding gloom. Here all was silent amidst the darkness, and the small familiar voices of bird and animal were unnaturally mute. Indeed, bird and animal life seemed singularly absent, nor were there the usual insects. Even the vegetation was oddly altered; they saw neither leaves, grass, nor ordinary shrubbery—only the great black shadows of old and withered trees.

One of the savages whispered that the woods were known in Pasquantog lore; he spoke of fissures and seams in the earth near certain of the denser swamps, and of queer voices that answered when the medicinemen called. Tribal legend hinted at these beings, half-animal and half-human, who held conclaves in the grottoes and glibbered rituals deep in the earth. The White Ice—by which he meant the glaciers—had done away with many of these things, but surviving presences existed still, hidden and waiting in the forest fastness. (8) That was why the animals and birds had fled to safer preserves in the north, where the tribe usually hunted.

"Turn back now," the guide counselled. "Soon comes night, and we shall be lost. We are brave men, and you carry mighty medicine in your Black Book, I know. But what good is the White God's magic against the demons that thunder in the earth?"

The other guide eagerly assented and urged that they at least cut across to the coast if they could not reach Kittery or York before darkness.

Gideon listened, tightlipped and silent, and his hand searched out the great Bible in his left saddle-pack.

He clutched the book to his bosom and sat erect in the saddle.

"Hear me out," he said. "It is in my mind that much truth lies in your heathen wisdom, for we dwell in an unknown and unhallowed land. Have not Increase and Cotton Mather, as well as other godly and eminent divines, affirmed that this America is the Devil's paradise? Have not we discovered witchcraft in the very centers of civiliza-

tion, hanging (9) the wizards in Boston and Salem? And are not these self-same witches and warlocks the minions of Satan who is lately be stirred the entire continent of Europe?

"I have had some slight experience in these matters. I was present at the trial of the notorious Mary Wright and talked to a pious and famous witch-finder, Jeremy Edmunds; he who has told us in his sermons of the geography of Hell—finding it to be exactly four thousand, three hundred and twenty-seven miles in circumference. It was he who urged me to dedicate myself to this journey."

As he spoke, Gideon was conscious of his inability to translate and transmit Edmunds' message to these simple savages. The great man had indeed spoken at length of the witchcraft meance; of the foul plague of sorcery which was even now ravaging Europe as well as the colonies. He told Gideon of the damage these creatures had wrought—of storms conjured up at sea, of children deranged, of cattle ravaged by disease. He spoke of the witches and their familiars; bats, mice, ousels, cats and animals unknown to any Bestiary, creatures of evil in animal-form bestowed upon witches as counselors and protectors by the Devil. Edmunds mentioned the various tests then in fashion whereby witches might be detected—trial by water, the search for witch-marks, and other scientific means of determining guilt.

"Since I learned of the extent of Satan's hold over this land, I have sought unceasingly to discover the source of this peril to our people," Godfrey continued. The Indians listened stolidly enough, but their shifting feet and the sidelong covert glances they bestowed upon the forest's surrounding shadows gave token of their unease.

Gideon tried to explain his mission—how he had preached his sermon against the Adversary and corresponded extensively with witch-finders in England, meanwhile meeting with brother parsons in Salem, Plymouth, Newport and the inland towns. All references in the Bible had been most assiduously studied, and from obscure sources he had secured dogeared and decaying copies of strange and terrible books. He had read the blasphemous accounts in the cryptic *Necronomicon* and the queer verse-sequence of Heber's *Daemonic Presences* with its sly hints and subtle allusions to the *Fable of the Tree and the Fruit*. In a manner befitting the true scholar, he endeavored to lay hands on all that had been written concerning the subject at hand, and he listened, as well.

Gradually, Gideon's interest had shifted to the direct study of those about him. He traced down rumors, sought the sources of stories told by isolated farmers in the far-off hills. There were the Indian myths to pon-

der upon as well; incredible legends of creatures who had lurked in the lands to the west and fled at the coming of the whites. The Pasquantogs held ancient beliefs concerning presences who had come to the earth from the sky or crawled out of caverns upon suitable evocation.

Many of these legends were far too fantastic for credence, but others ominously paralleled normal Christian dogma.

Horned entities—creatures with wings and hoofs—cloven footprints found in swamps—giant stags speaking in the voices of men—black beings dancing in forest glens to the sound of drums deep within the earth—these things the savages feared even as Christians did. Such stories fired Gideon with fresh zeal, and more momentous still were the actual reports of specific instances which he gleaned from visitors and hunters who dealt with isolated and half-forgotten settlements.

Here in New England whole villages had mysteriously disappeared, not through famine or Indian attack, but by the simple process of evaporation. One day they existed and the next day nothing remained but a cluster of empty houses. Other communities held dark communion under midnight moons, and children of neighboring villages were known to have vanished mysteriously just before such occasions. Sometimes a minister reached a neighboring town with an account of his rejection by parishioners in favor of new and secret ways of worship. There was talk of ceremonies in which both white men and savages adored a common altar; of isolated towns grown suddenly and amazingly prosperous in barren wilds.

More dreadful still were the mumbled accounts of strange happenings in isolated graveyards; of open graves, of coffins seemingly burst from within, of graves that were not deep enough for their purpose and of graves there were far too deep, leading to tunnels beneath the earth.

These tales and others of like nature, together with the written testimony he gathered, increased steadily during the year or more of Gideon's investigation. But appeals to authority for the commissioning of a crusade into the hinterlands met with no success. The courts were overburdened with local witchcraft trials. Storm as he would that the evil must be stamped out at its source, Gideon's sermons and appeals fell upon deaf ears. Slowly he realized that he could look for no outside aid in his battle with the Adversary.

"I have but one ally," he concluded, to the Pasquantog guides. "The Almighty attends me in this mission.

"For whilst the courts labor against a few aged men and women who practise sorcery in Salem or Boston Town, the gravest source of Evil

still festers here in the wilds, crouches in the forest and broods on these silent and secret hills. Gallows Hill (10) cannot accommodate all the minions of Satan. This I have long since concluded.

"It has been in my mind that even as the godly have their houses of worship in which to gather and to spread the Gospel unto all, so must the spawn of Satan have builded an unsanctified sanctuary of their own. If this could be found, reached, and destroyed, then the forces of Evil could be dissipated and the hand of the Devil lifted from the land.

"Lately there came to me news of the lone village where the black northern forest pressed down on a desolate coast—this Roodsford. And it was as though revelation were made: surely, I thought, this must be the very center of sin I seek!

"I have ridden forth to destroy it, and I shall not turn back. For the Lord is with me, and with you, and there is nothing to fear. No, my friends, we shall go on and do what must be done. Let us not speak again of returning until our task is accomplished."

So saying, Gideon lifted his Bible in a blessing, and with his left hand he cocked a pistol which he pointed at the guides for added emphasis. Thus assured of his earnest conviction, the guides offered no further protest when Gideon bid them move forward down the trail into the gathering night.

Gideon, despite his outward show of assurance, felt his stomach quake with trepidation, for he knew full well the dangers amongst which he placed himself. He feared the aspect of this night-wood almost as mightily as did the guides, and he was not reassured to sense the body of his horse trembling as if taken with a sudden fever. But he still had his Bible and his prayers, plus the small comfort of a new lantern which he now lit and tendered to one of the Pasquantogs who led the way.

Unexpectedly, they came upon an open glade in the midst of the forest. Here, beneath a turbulent sky, dimly illumined by a cloud-choked moon, Godfrey and his two companions prepared to spend the night. Reaching Roodsford this evening was obviously out of the question, and the savages seemed oddly relieved when Gideon called a halt and tethered his horse.

Silently the Pasquantogs gathered dry wood for a fire and kindled it, Indian fashion, at the base of a cairn in the center of the clearing. There followed a brief repast of salt pork and corn bread (11) taken from one of Gideon's capacious saddlebags. The horse was fed and watered—for one of the guides discovered a brook that crawled in sluggish murk a-

long one side of the clearing—then tethered again to a sapling at the edge of the glade.

There was little conversation, for the spoken word seemed to sling to the vast, silent pool of the surrounding night. The Pasquantogs lay down upon their blankets and gave themselves up to uneasy prayers to the guiding Manitou. Gideon paid them no heed, but sat lone by the lantern-light, his pistol across his lap and his Bible in hand, reading aloud softly and steadfastly from the tale of Jehu the witch-hunter.

After a time he closed the book and placed it beneath his head for a pillow. Then he extinguished the lantern and the night came down. He lay there for long moments in the darkness, fighting the panic which came with the baleful blanketing of blackness. Steadfastly, Gideon prayed himself to sleep. So the long night passed, and slowly the flame of dawn kindled the heads of the giant trees.

As Gideon awoke from dream-bedazzled sleep, he stared about the clearing with new comprehension. In last night's gloom he had not taken cognizance of the unnatural and *artificial* aspects of the glade. Now for the first time he noticed how smooth was the turf surrounding the great triad of white stones at its center. He regarded the peculiar geometrical conformation of the rocks themselves; the carefully chipped and pointed angles which bore such a calculated relation to the positions of certain of the major stars upon summer nights. There were a few grotesque carvings at the base of the stones which were obviously the product of human handicraft; crude designs which resembled the signs and symbols Gideon had seen in some of the mouldering books of elder lore.

Could he have unwittingly chosen to pass the night in one of the meeting-places the Indians had spoken of with such dread? If so, perhaps it was only his prayers which had protected him.

Thus Gideon mused, his eyes roving the glade. Then he sat bolt upright with a sudden start, as he realized that he was now the sole occupant of the clearing.

His horse and the two guides were gone.

II

ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS, Gideon Godfrey took counsel with himself. He had but two possible alternatives; the first being to retrace his foot-steps and endeavor to overtake the Pasquantogs and his horse and either reclaim his property by force or join them on the trip

back to civilization. The second alternative, obviously, was to continue on to Roodsford alone.

To a man of sense, the first course was undoubtedly advisable. But Gideon was not a man of sense—he was a man of God. As such, he determined, he would complete his mission. Without food, water, steed or guide he meant to travel today through the forest and reach Roodsford before nightfall. He still had his pistol and his Bible but these were as nothing compared to his faith.

He drank and washed at the brook, then rose, gave one last parting glance to the singular altar-stones within the clearing, and turned his eyes resolutely forward to woods.

As Gideon tried the cryptic byways of the lonely fastness, his thoughts were far away. He was endeavoring now to formulate a new plan of procedure. It had been his original intention to ride into Roodsford on horseback and proceed immediately to go about the business of exorcising the spot with certain efficacious incantations as he had gleaned from the forbidden volumes over which he had pored so diligently. He was confident that he had transcribed spells of fearsome potency which would dispel the evil-doers before they could overcome him either physically or through magical means. Now all this must be abandoned, for the copies of the runes reposed in one of the saddlebags on the back of the missing horse.

Gideon's faith in the righteousness of his cause remained unshaken, even though hunger grew in his belly with the rising sun. His stride lengthened as he passed through a grove of bearded trees that muttered in the morning breeze like sage elders in some secret council. Then he emerged upon the bank of a goodly river which he must wade, then swim across, wetting himself to the skin and all but perishing in the turbulent concourse of waters. The tidal margin was high, but Gideon managed to clamber through, holding Bible and pistol alike aloft, at no small peril to his own safety.

He did not pause to dry his garments, but walked briskly along the opposite bank, for an empty stomach makes for haste. He covered several miles—many, however, on side-trails on which he had to backtrack his way (12)—before the shortened rays of the sun betokened the approach of late afternoon. It was then that he came upon the jutting peak of a lone hill, rising out of the encircling forest like a newly-emerged island from the green waves of the sea. This was the place where he turned in a northeasterly direction to the coast, and he quickened his pace so that he might come to his destination well before nightfall. But there were

other mistakes made without the service of a guide, and he wandered again and again from the path, so that night descended all too soon.

Strange shadows haunted the New England dusk. The drowsy hum of autumn was in the air, and the landscape shimmered in a wan mist, borne on a moaning night wind from the waters to the east.

It was dark when Gideon saw a deep inlet of the sea. A gibbous moon hung over the fog-wreathed waters, and by the pallid light above the high bluff, Gideon Godfrey first beheld the village of Roodsford.

At first glance there was nothing extraordinary about the sight of the little community set against the background of ancient forest. Fourteen tiny two story frame houses (13) stood huddled about the needle-like spire of a crude church in prosaic and orthodox fashion. Gideon peered at them and wondered what there was about their aspect and setting which was awry. Perhaps it was the crazy slant of their gables to the sea; mayhap he sensed the strangeness in the absence of friendly lights in the gaping windows and upon the jutting wharf below the bluff. But all this was commonplace enough. Gideon stared and pondered at the spectacle.

Then it came to him that no road wound cheerily away amongst the hills; no figures moved along the single street. The town was silent, desolate and lone.

Gideon stood for long moments contemplating the scene, and for longer moments contemplating his own plight. Enter Roodsford he must, but neither Bible nor pistol would serve to rout any evil he might encounter there. No; this was a situation which called for cunning and stratagem; one must fight fire with fire and Gideon knew he was face to face with the Adversary, the Father of Lies.

Gideon Godfrey, servant of the Lord, would not be welcome in Roodsford, if rumor and repute held truth. But a stranger, lost in the forest, might find shelter. He might be given an opportunity to spend some time in the village; to observe and overhear, to plan a strategy.

Yes, that was now the only way. Gideon walked a few paces until he found a large stone beside the path. Here he knelt and scrabbled at the hard earth, hollowing out a place of concealment for his Bible. He rose, gripping his pistol, then made a wry face as he considered its uselessness. He might fire it once, but he lacked powder and ball for any further use. With a sigh, he placed the pistol alongside the Bible and then covered the hiding-place with loose earth, replacing the rock. He noted the spot well, before striding down toward the village in the gloom of night.

No dogs howled at his coming, but the wind whispered strangely as he approached the end of the little crooked street between the huddled dwelling-places. The first house loomed ahead in shrouded darkness to his left, far back from the dusty, unpaved street. Gideon paused and considered whether or not to continue his progress, then shrugged. For his purpose, one house was as good as another; as a lone wanderer, lost in the forest, he would be most apt to seek shelter at the first door along his path.

Gideon walked up to the black, iron-knocked door set between two shuttered windows. He plied the knocker against the timbers until a booming resonation filled the brooding stillness of the street. (14) For a long moment he stood there, sensing naught but the diminution of the echoes, and then, with a screech and a shudder, the door swung open.

"Welcome," said a voice from the inner gloom. "Welcome to Roodsford."

Gideon stepped over the threshold and into another world.

III

FOR A MOMENT GIDEON STOOD engulfed in darkness and silence, then started violently as the darkness was broken by lantern-light and the silence shattered by the screech of the closing door.

Eyes and ears affrighted by sudden sensation, Gideon steeled himself against any revelation. Yet nothing he might have imagined was comparable to the shock of actuality—for he now beheld himself standing in a room that was utterly normal in its aspect.

It was the low-raftered parlor of a typical New England farmhouse, complete with stone fireplaces, hand-hewn furniture, rough flooring covered by the skins of animals. Gideon's gaze encountered naught but the familiar fixtures of family existence in the wilderness; he even noted a spinning-wheel near the window alcove to his right.

Nor was he able to detect anything unusual in the aspect of his host, who turned now, lantern in hand, to confront him with a welcoming smile. The man before him was stooped and bent, with lined face and grizzled beard. He squinted up at Gideon with a cheerful grin and extended a gnarled hand in greeting.

"I fear you roused me from slumber," he said. "I am alone here and it is my custom to retire early, for it is not often that visitors honor me with their presence." He glanced self-consciously at his homespun shirt and breeches. "I must make shift with what garment I possess," he

continued, "for there is no one to tend to my needs. You will excuse my appearance."

Gideon nodded, then cleared his throat. "It is I who must apologize. I have gone astray in my journeyings, I fear."

"We see few travelers here," the old man observed, eyeing Gideon closely. "You must have strayed far indeed."

Gideon met his stare and smiled. "I would gladly tell you of my journey. At the moment I am somewhat tired and more than a little hungry—"

The hint did not pass unnoticed.

"Of course. You are welcome to sup and spend the night here."

Thus prosaically began Gideon's stay in Roodsford; as the house guest of old Dorcas Frye. Dorcas was a widower who had come here in '74; he lived alone, hunted and fished, kept his own household. This Gideon learned during the serving of a simple repast—this, and nothing more, although he attempted to draw out his host with remitting patience. But Dorcas Frye proved taciturn and evasive by turns.

Ordinarily, Gideon would have accepted such reticence as normal and natural—for it was not the way of the Puritan to be overly friendly with casual strangers. But suspecting what he did, Gideon read a baleful meaning into his host's unwillingness to talk about himself.

Yet there was nothing to justify any suggestion of hidden secrets or closely-guarded mysteries. The house looked typical, Dorcas seemed a harmless enough elderly settler, and there wasn't even a hint of abnormality, until—

There came a scratching and scrabbling. Gideon's spoon clashed against the pewter bowl as he started erect, but his trepidation was as naught compared to that of his host. At the sound, old Dorcas seemed transfixed with terror. And yet, even in the brief moment of awareness, Gideon sensed that the terror was not directed towards the scratching noise, or what might produce it—the old man was afraid because Gideon *heard* the sound.

A scratching and a scrabbling. Gideon turned towards the door, noting that his host made no move to open it. At the same time he realized the reason; the very nature of the sound itself told him that it did not come from the direction of the door. Whatever person, or animal, or demon of the night might be rasping nail or claw to produce the noise, the resultant product was not caused by a scraping against wood. This was the sound of scraping against metal, or against stone—and it did not come from the direction of the door.

Gideon Godfrey's gaze encompassed the room. Was there a panel, a compartment? But how could there be, and of stone or metal? Then he noted Dorcas Frye's stare. The old man was peering at the floor under the table.

The scraping sound grew louder, became a tangible presence in the room. It was no longer possible for one to pretend not to hear, and in a moment it became impossible to pretend not to see.

For the floor *rose*.

A portion of the hardpacked earthen floor beneath the table was moving upwards. Gideon's glance pierced into the shadows, noted for the first time that there was a solid stone surface, a moving surface; recognized the rectangular outline of a trapdoor.

Dorcas was on his feet, and a moment later Gideon stood up—stood up and retreated to the wall as the trapdoor continued to rise.

Without a glance at his guest, the old man stooped and tugged the edge of the door. Gideon saw a black, well-like opening, from which issued further blackness; a moving, tangible blackness that was alive.

The blackness had a red mouth and yellow fangs, red eyes and grey, pointed claws; it was too large for a cat and too small for a wolf, and most men would have identified it as a hound. But Gideon knew that this was no ordinary black dog—anyone well-versed in the ways of witchcraft could recognize a familiar.

The beast emerged from the cistern-like opening in the earth and squatted, panting and slaving, blinking in the candlelight. For a moment it seemed unaware of Gideon's presence, and then a low growl issued from the crimson cavern of its throat. Dorcas instantly grasped it by its forepaws and restrained it, but the growling increased in volume and accelerated in tempo.

Gideon continued to press against the wall. He stood there, staring at man and beast squatting before him, stood there listening to the baying of the hound, stood there sensing the *wrongness* of it all. For unless he were completely bemused, something was hideously awry. The cadence of the growling was almost *conversational*, and Dorcas bent his head in a pose that could only be construed as that of a *listener*. The great dog growled, and the old man listened, and then they both sat and stared at Gideon.

He knew, then. There was no longer room for any possibility of doubt. Each witch, each wizard or warlock dedicated to the Devil, is assigned a familiar; an imp or sprite or evil spirit sent by Satan in the guise of an animal to counsel and advise, to assist and abet, to watch and to

warn. Nourished by blood from the body of the master, the creature serves and protects always. This was Dorcas Frye's familiar—the hound of Hell.

Gideon Godfrey knew, and they knew that he knew. The moment for pretense was past for all of them. Nothing remained but to act. If Dorcas acted, it would be to release the great beast, release it to tear at Gideon's throat. And in a moment he would act, unless—

Gideon spoke.

"I see I have indeed found sanctuary," he said.

"Sanctuary?" The echoed reply was an incredulous curse in Dorcas Frye's mouth, but he held the hound still.

"Until I saw the trapdoor I was not sure, but now I know." Gideon forced a smile to his lips, but Dorcas averted his gaze in confusion.

"I do not understand," he said. "I am but a simple farmer. As you see, the beast is ill-trained; he is of use to me in hunting but I find I must keep him in restraint at other times. Hence I digged this pit—"

Gideon saw his host's hesitancy displayed in his gnarled hands. Gradually they were loosing their grip about the dog's neck. In an instant, should hesitancy give way to decision, he would let the creature spring. Gideon moved quickly.

"Come," he said. "There is no need to deceive me. I know, else I would not have come at this time. I should like to see what lies beneath the house." Unhesitatingly, he walked towards the table, pushed it back, and knelt by the rim of the pit.

As he had surmised, crude footholds had been fashioned in the slanting earth beneath. Gideon was prepared for the domination of the darkness, but the waft of mephitic fetor from below was almost unbearable. Still he smiled as he glanced over his shoulder at Dorcas and the hound.

"Light my way," he urged. "Can it be that you are afraid to accompany me?"

The taunt was sufficient. Dorcas gripped a candle with one hand and held the dog by the scruff of the neck with his other hand. Slowly, he knelt and placed his feet gingerly, dragging the black beast behind him. Gideon prepared to follow.

For a moment he felt an irresistible impulse to take flight. It would be simple now to slam down the stone covering to the pit, place the stout table squarely upon the trapdoor and flee into the night. The night was dark and foreboding, but a deeper darkness lurked here below. It would be simple, it would be easy—but Gideon had a mission.

He breathed deeply, then lowered himself into the pit.

They clambered down; the wrinkled wizard, the hound of Hell, and the man of God, descending into the blackness of the bourne. The candle cast shadows on the earthen walls; shadows that crept and capered their way towards inner depths. Gideon counted fifty footholds, then felt solid shale beneath his feet.

Now they were in a corridor; now they walked silently along until they reached a large chamber carved out of the solid stone. The air was cleaner, moistly cool, and Gideon surmised they must be close to the inlet of the sea.

Dorcas led the way, tugging the hound behind him, and Gideon followed, followed until they rounded a corner of the cavern and emerged into the great dazzling center of light.

The huge chamber was empty, or seemed so at first glance. Gideon saw a vast circular expanse, an underground grotto of stone, with perhaps a dozen lesser entrances spaced at intervals around the walls—entrances similar to the one in which they stood, and undoubtedly reached from other houses in the street above by the same means; trapdoor and tunnel. He saw the carvings on the walls and recognized them, then turned his gaze to the center of the cavern and saw the altar, which he likewise recognized as similar to the stone in the forest clearing.

There were two figures lying across the top of the altar stone.

Gideon moved forward, peering, eyes dazzled by the light which he now perceived came from tapers set in niches along the grotto walls. He moved forward, Dorcas and the hound at his heels, watching, waiting, hesitating. There was something about the figures on the altar which Gideon wanted to verify.

Half-way across the stone floor of the cavern he halted. A sudden rush of sound assailed his ears, coming from *behind* and *below* the other side of the altar. It was a noise composed of many individual noises; rustlings, cheepings, chitterings, cachinnations in cacophony. And then the sound became a sight; a sight rising over the rim of the altar. Again, the sight was composed of many things.

A black, arched furry back . . . a flaring of leathery wings . . . a lashing, tiny tail . . . a fanged grimace . . . a diadem of yellow eyes . . . an arc of curving claw . . .

They crawled atop the altar in a wave; the cat, the bat, the ousel, the rat, the grinning grimalkin risen from haunted dreams. They spat and snarled and leered and mocked at Gideon as he recognized them for what they were—brothers of the dog behind him, minions of the pit, the familiars of the witches of Roodsford. They squatted on the altar,

clawing at the two all-too familiar figures that lay silently there. They squatted and they stared at Gideon, as if daring his further approach. They hissed at him and threatened with eyes and teeth and paws.

Dorcas and the hound were very close behind. Gideon could hear the rasp of the old man's breath, the deep panting of the black beast. Still there was nothing to do but peer at the altar; peer and finally recognize the truth.

The two atop the altar were dead, but Gideon knew them now. He saw the two Indian guides who had deserted him in the forest.

How stalked, how slain, how brought here for sacrifice? How prepared now to shock him into admission of identity?

Gideon could not ponder. His every move was studied as he stood within a circle of yellow eyes.

Then the voice of Dorcas Frye croaked out, echoing through the vaulted arch of the pit.

"You have seen. Have you naught to say?"

Gideon stood silent a moment. This was the crisis. He thought of invocation and of prayer, cast the thought aside. It was not the time, But there never would be a time unless he spoke and spoke aright. Inwardly, he prayed for guidance.

They watched him for a long moment, watched him as he turned to Dorcas Frye and smiled.

"Everything is as I would desire," he said. "You have slain the two Pasquantogs and disposed of the horse as well, I note. That is good. No one could possibly have noted my coming. I shall stay with you now until the Sabbat. You are a wise and faithful servant."

Dorcas Frye's eyes widened as Gideon spoke. The mention of the horse was an inspiration on Gideon's part—and at the utterance of the words "Sabbat" and "servant," the old man's mouth gaped.

"Who—who are you?" he whispered. There was silence in the cavern as he bent forward for a reply; silence as the creatures of the night peered up at Gideon and awaited an answer.

Gideon smiled and shrugged. His hands signed the cross in reverse.

"Do you not recognize me?" he asked. "I am the Messenger of the Master, sent to prepare the way for his coming. I am Asmodeus—Prince of Hell!"

IV

LATER—MUCH LATER—Gideon slept, in the chambers above,

upon a couch of deerskin. But not before he explained that his coming was but a test of Dorcas Fry's fidelity to Satan; not before he had perjured his way into complete acceptance; not before the fawning hound had licked his fingers.

The seventy-odd inhabitants of Roodsford had been summoned to the dark chamber to greet him, and toasts were drunk in a strange wine. Gideon chose to be silent in his new role, and to play the listener. His choice was accepted, nor did the strangers he met find it unusual or unseemly that a demon in human form should be reserved and demanding.

He spoke only enough to convey the pretense that all he heard was already known to him, but inwardly he quaked, and when finally he sought slumber he found only a delirium of dreams.

The days that followed seemed but a continuation of initial nightmare. Gideon deemed it wise to remain as Dorcas Fry's guest although he came and went as he chose, as befitted a Prince of Hell. None durst question him closely, although he asked questions in plenty. Ready respect and ready answers were accorded him always.

He learned of the growth of Roodsford, of the initial coming to these bleak and barren shores at a date which sounded incredible to his ears. Still, that alone could explain the mouldering antiquity of their houses — so seemingly decrepit and poorly-fashioned on the exterior, but possessed of the labyrinthian passageways to the secret vaults beneath.

Gideon was told why the Indians had fled, but why the hunting and fishing were so good despite the fears of the animals who wisely shunned the spot; he learned, too, why crops grew lushly in rocky soil, and from whence came the exotic herbs used in charm and philtre.

There were those who spoke to him of the storms raised at sea, so that two stout and goodly ships had foundered off these shores. These had been salvaged, and some of the passengers saved, only to be given later in sacrifice. Food and luxuries had been procured from the vessels, but his informants were most pleased that some of the bodies of the drowned had been delivered from the sea.

When told of the uses to which these corpses had been put, Gideon's mask slipped badly, but there was worse to come.

He learned, gradually, why there were no children amongst the inhabitants of Roodsford, and he wondered at the absence of a common graveyard.

And then, one night, he learned —

" 'Tis good you came," Dorcas Frye told him, between gulps of the dark, heavy rum he'd been consuming throughout the early evening.

"For as your Master knows, our plans are near completion. Long have we bided on this bleak coast, abuilding for the future; living in hovels mean and small to avoid suspicion, and conducting our worship under ground. And now the time of reckoning draws nigh."

Gideon nodded as the old man poured a brimming beaker.

"I'm the leader, you might say, of the Coven. As such, I owe responsibility to none but the Master himself. I'm honored that you were sent to help me plan the Sabbath, for it means we are ready. Ready at last! Ready to rise and rule."

Ready to rise and rule. Gideon was on the track at last, and he drew his host out at length. Nor was the drunken oldster reluctant to babble freely.

The domain of Satan must expand, he said. Cotton Mather had not been far wrong when he said America was the witches' paradise. But it could never be held by ignorant old women or queer rural wizards. It was true that some thousands of these folk resided in New England, but they were for the most part isolated and unorganized. They limited their activities to clumsy attempts at brewing potions, or casting minor spells and afflictions on their enemies. Even the flying trips through the wild and smoke-crowned hills resulted in naught but nocturnal revels and a few meaningless ceremonies which could bring naught of pleasure to Satan the All-Lowest.

Besides, the persecution of witches had resulted in a sad diminution of worship. It was time for Roodsford to act, and to this end had its people builded and abided.

Once let an organized band of believers fall upon the cities and claim them for the Master—then all would give way before them. There was unrest in the Colonies today; many people were tired of the restrictions of the Church and the taxes of the King. They would rise if given encouragement. For the others, there would be plague and pestilence, storm and famine, with the Devil's help.

It needed only bold action. A foray on a village, a descent upon a town, a gradual encroachment and engulfment, and within a year or two the country would be won. It was unlikely that Mother England would take much note of her recalcitrant colonial possessions, and if so, there were always storms and mistrials, and strange creatures awaited a summoning from sea-slimed depths.

Then would America become truly the land of Satan! The Antichrist would overcome the Kingdom of Heaven, and the unholy federation of the new world might even in time rise and smite the churches of the old.

"But there are so few of you," Gideon objected, knowing as he spoke that there was some mystery unrevealed.

"Yet as you realize, we cannot be harmed," Dorcas Frye chuckled in reply. "In that lies our strength. Once our enemies in town and village realize this, they will flee before us. Surely, you understand how it will be."

"Surely," Gideon nodded.

"And now we must prepare for the Sabbath, prepare for the coming of the Master. He will proclaim the day of his rule, order and instruct us from the Great Hill."

They could not be harmed.

Gideon pondered that as Dorcas droned on. Soon would come All-Hallows Eve and the night of Sacrifice. Then would (15) they strike and with a vengeance.

They had come here over a hundred years ago and there were no children.

Gideon pieced together the hints, and Dorcas told him of the coming festival, of the sacrifices of cattle awaiting, of the children to be taken from the village of Wells.

They could not be harmed and there were no graveyards in Roodsford.

Gideon gazed as Dorcas, who spoke like a man, drank like a man, looked like a man, but who was more, or less, than any man alive.

Alive. The people of Roodsford were living dead.

That was the secret. For this they had sold their souls to Satan, so they could live past their appointed time without harm. In a flash Gideon recalled not only the absence of children, but the predominance of oldsters. He recalled the glee with which they told of the recovery of drowned bodies—new habitations for the lost souls, the damned souls. Soon as army of undead would be abroad in the land, striking terror and bringing death to the godly. Soon. Very soon.

"We'll learn on Sabbath-Even," Dorcas droned.

Gideon knew that Sabbath-Eve was but three nights distant.

He excused himself, shortly thereafter, but not until the moon was high over the domed hills. (16) He already knew that he had been assigned the seventh place in the Coven (17) upon the coming night, but there yet remained the problem of what to do about it.

As he slipped through the darkness towards the trees that loomed beyond Roodsford, Gideon remembered only one thing.

There were only three nights until the Sabbath. . .

V

THE SUN SANK SULLENLY in the hovering western hills, and murky darkness fell upon New England. Prayers were muttered in ten thousand homes, services offered up in a hundred hamlets, charms recited and spells inscribed upon amulets, doors barred and churches bolted.

Was it not Hallow-Mass, the Night of the Black Lord? It was the night of the eldritch vision, of mildewed magic, of the flying ointment, of the heart torn bloody and dripping from the breast, of the black bullock of sacrifice, of the whimpering child ravished from the home, of the horned moon, of the fire of sacrifice. (18)

The Pasquantogs offered up strange prayers, and the squaws mumbled knowingly in the wigwam darkness. Old crones and hoary grand-sires were absent from their hovels, and heifers and cats alike seemed to have disappeared. As for the great Cotton Mather, he was sick abed with a colic, devil-sent.

It was Hallow-Mass, and drums thundered on the northern hills, throbbing and pulsing, chanting of the Sabbat. Sometimes they whispered of secrets buried beneath stark New England crags that were old when man was young and *others* shambled through the blackness and howled worship in the autumn night. Sometimes they roared out a challenge of defiance to all sanity. Sometimes they beat out messages to listeners from Beyond, invitations to attend the revels to come.

Roodsford lay deserted beneath the gloating moon, but beyond the forest, at the Great Hill, all had assembled. The women leading the bullocks, the men smeared with the unguents of evil, the celebrants from afar had gathered to squat upon the mildewed turf within the circle of stones. Crouching and nestling beside them were pawing, furry hordes of night; the familiars, imp-spawn of Abaddon.

Gideon Godfrey stood beside the altar-stone, staring into the blackness ringing the circling hills. His was a signal honor, for he was one of the three appointed to lead the bullocks unto sacrifice. The tethered beasts lowed dolorously, shaking their massive heads. Black candles had been attached to their horns and scent sprinkled over their glossy bodies. Their hooves were gilded, manes braided, and they stood now inhaling the reek of Sabbat ointment rising from the half-naked throng of celebrants below the altar mound.

Gideon was grateful for his place apart with the bullocks, for the revels had started in earnest. Nameless bayers yammered through the

echoing hills. The throng milled and shrilled and clamored, dancing and shrieking in honor of Lucifer as the drums beat on, shaking the firmament with their promise of greater abandon to come.

Wine was passed, wine was drunk, wine was spilled and mingled with blood. Torches flared and faded through tableau after tableau of obscene celebration. Gideon stood impassive beside the bullocks, and at his side was Dorcas Frye, face enmasked with a hooded cowl from which goat-horns rose to signify his priesthood in the Sabbat ritual.

Neither spoke. Gideon had avoided Frye for three days now, and he wondered if the old man suspected what it was he had done here in the forest when he stole away at midnight. Gideon wondered if he had a plan of his own—and Gideon waited, glancing from time to time at the altar-stone, on which a black cloth had been placed to hold the silver bowl and the silver knife of sacrifice.

But there would be no time for waiting, no time for wondering. The drums were building something in the darkness; something that throbbed and vibrated, something that soared and summoned. And now Dorcas was stepping up to the altar, wearing the Crown of Horns, and the first bullock was led forward, lowing, to kneel beneath the knife. The deed was done, the bowl was passed, and the drums thundered a litany to the Elder Shepherd.

Dorcas Frye stood alone: now on the altar-top. Before the sacrifice of the other bullocks, the Summons would be made.

Dorcas held aloft the silver knife and the silver bowl. He signalled to the drummers in darkness and they fell silent.

Silently the celebrants moved forward, to gather below the altar mound and the altar stone. Dorcas bowed before the black cloth and began to chant.

Gideon recognized words, recognized syllables, recognized Latin cadence. But he did not recognize the response. The response was a drumming not made by drummers, a thunder not created by clouds. It was a roaring from *beneath* the very hills encircling them. And it rose, as Dorcas Frye's voice rose, as the faces of the Coven rose in expectation of the Coming. In a moment now—

Dorcas Frye's voice faltered. The thundering cadence missed a beat. He stared at the black altar-cloth in puzzlement. Gideon knew it was the time. He stepped forward, walked to the altar, stooped and came up in a single gesture with the silver knife. It flashed out, ripping at Frye's chest.

The oldster recoiled in sudden amazement, and a howl arose from the

throng. As they hesitated, Gideon stabbed again, but saw no stain of blood appear. It was as he had dreaded.—Dorcas Frye was dead, yet alive.

There was one other way. He snatched the black covering from the altar and grasped the bulk beneath it—the bulk he had placed there three nights before. He raised it aloft and brought it down on Frye's horned head. There was a crunching sound, the sound made by the splinter of rotted bones.

Frye fell, and the cowl brushed from his face, revealed the wormy countenance of a thing long dead.

The crowd screamed, not only at the act but at the sight of Gideon Godfrey's weapon—the bulk of the great Bible he had rescued from its burial place beneath the stones and put on Satan's altar.

"Yes!" Gideon's voice rose exultant above their cries. "It's the Holy Bible, the Word of the Living God. And I am His Messenger, whom none may harm!"

Thunder echoed—true thunder, this time, from the clouds above. Out of the swirling sky came the blinding bolt, followed by the torrential tempest of sudden rain. And Gideon, crying the name of his God, descended from the altar, smiting and laying about him with the Bible for a weapon—and none that he touched could either flee or withstand him.

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Due to increases in storage and other costs, it has become necessary for us to increase the price of *all* back issues to 60c the copy. Current issues, however, can be obtained from us for the cover price of 50c per copy, during the sales period. We seek no special advantage from the unhappy fact that you may not be able to find the current issue on your local newsstands; while we have been able to increase the coverage somewhat, we know it is very far from good.

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It's a constant war to try to get *MAGAZINE OF HORROR, STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION, and WORLD WIDE ADVENTURE* on to your newsstands—and then keep them appearing there issue after issue. We win on one front, and are pushed back on another.

If you're in an area where we've suffered reverses, so that you don't see us, there is a simple remedy; you'll find it on pages 125 and 128 of this issue.

Only corpses remained to litter the altar-base, to lie rotting in the rain. Gideon fought the fiends in a frenzy, fought them in darkness, touching them with God's word, muttering prayers that were curses and curses that were prayers. And in the end it was all over. He stood alone upon the field as the torrent washed away all but the foul odor of decay.

Then he fell upon his knees and gave thanks before setting out on the trail that led to the south. In the morning there would be clean light over the peaceful spires of Portsmouth and he would tell the good folk there that he had wandered lost in the wilderness these long weeks past.

Of Roodsford and its ways, of the peril just averted, Gideon would never speak. He knew that the village had fallen with its people and that birds and beasts would soon return there to claim as their own a land made free from the shadows of a fearsome blight. Soon Roodsford's very memory would be forgotten.

And that was as it should be, for come what may, witchcraft was now forever broken in New England. Satan's Servants were gone forever.

Index of Lovecraft's footnotes

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is necessarily only a partial listing of HPL's notations. Some of them exist in the form of addenda and sentences which he inserted in the text of the story. Others are indications for word-changes, insertions or deletions, all of which have been made in the text and are therefore unnecessary to repeat here. And true to form, HPL also added marginal comments of praise from time to time. The notations listed here are sufficient indication of the Lovecraft scholarship, passion for exactitude, and virtual omniscience.)

1. The original mss. gives the name as Rood-ford. HPL suggests "Roodsford" saying, "The hyphenated place name would not have occurred in early New England."

2. HPL says "Be careful about your archaisms. Certain antique spelling had vanished by 1672. Nouns were chiefly capitalized in ordinary text."

3. HPL noted that the book was printed in Boston in my original mss. and changed it to London, saying, "I doubt if Salem had a printing press as early as 1672. Nor were works of a general, non-theological character printed so early anywhere in the colonies."

4. The "or traders" was added by HPL who comments, "Savages didn't do much coastal navigation. Whites traded considerably."

5. HPL noted that I spoke of the "Church of New England" and altered it, saying, "There was no officially recognized Church of N. E. The two fully Puritan colonies—Mass. and Conn.—supported the orthodox church known eventually as the Congregational. R. I. represents a revolt against and a repudiation of this theocratic dominance."

6. HPL--"There would not be fallen leaves even in Southern Maine till well over the line in October. The height of autumn foliage in central New England is about Oct. 10 to 15."

7. The previous sentence was inserted by HPL with comment, "Travel was very slow in 1690." And on the obverse side of the mss. page, he lists four ferry passages by name, followed by such estimates as "on horseback--av. 5 MPH. With guides on foot--av. 3 MPH. Boston-Newb.--40M. Newb.-Ports.--20 M. Ports-Roodf.--20 M. Time from Ports. to Roodf. should be 8 or 9 h., allowing for rest, delays. Starting 6 A M, intending to arrive at 3 P M, delays add 5 to 6 hours more--hence twilight or nocturnal advent would be correct." This is an excellent example of HPL's perfectionist approach to his own work.

8. HPL comments, "Probably no Indians in America before the post-glacial era--but let imagination have free scope!"

9. HPL reminds me of what I had forgotten and hence miswritten when he changes a word and says, "No witchcraft suspects were ever *burned* in North America."

10. HPL--"Gallows Hill, Salem, not so named till 1692 witchcraft." Since I revised chronology of story, it is now correct to refer to it.

11. Mss. originally spoke of venison and dried pemmican, but HPL changed, saying, "Venison not so common, and journey not long enough for pemmican."

12. HPL--"We have to be careful about geography, picking a part of the coast not thickly settled in 1690."

13. I spoke of log houses, but HPL--"Log houses not used in New England and never any cross on Puritan churches."

14. "Panels" in ms. HPL--"No panelled doors at this period in small cottages."

15. I wrote "wouldst" but HPL struck it out, explaining, "Wouldst is second person singular. Beware of false archaisms, lest you fall into the misleading patios of some of Hodgson's stuff."

16. Orig. "Merrimack hills." But: "Merrimack too far south, or, in upper reaches, west, unless long-distance flights are intended."

17. HPL inserted "place in," saying, "A coven is a whole local unit of the cult. Roodsford would have but one."

18. HPL asks, "How local do you assume the Roodsford celebration to be? Is it a Sabbath confined to the one village coven or do others come from afar to participate? If the latter, insert on the evil travellers abroad in the night."



Cross Of Fire

by Lester Del Rey

THAT RAIN! WILL IT NEVER STOP? My clothes are soaked, my body frozen. But at least the lightning is gone. Strange, I haven't seen it since I awoke. There was lightning, I think. I can't seem to remember anything clearly, yet I am sure there was a fork of light in the sky; no, not a fork; it was like a cross.

That's silly, of course. Lightning can't form a cross. It must have been a dream while I was lying there in the mud. I don't recall how I came there, either. Perhaps I was ambushed and robbed, then left there until the rain brought me to. But my head doesn't hurt; the pain is in my shoulder, a sharp, jabbing ache. No, I couldn't have been robbed; I still have my ring, and there is money in my pocket.

I wish I could remember what happened. When I try to think, my brain refuses. There is some part of it that doesn't want to remember. Now why should that be? There . . . No, it's gone again. It must have been another dream; it had to be. Horrible!

Now I must find shelter from the rain. I'll make a fire when I get home and stop trying to think until my mind is rested. Ah, I know where home is. This can't be so terrible if I know that . . .

There, I have made a fire and my clothes are drying before it. I was right; this is my home. And I'm Karl Hahrhoffer. Tomorrow I'll ask in the village how I came here. The people in Altdorf are my friends. Altdorf! When I am not trying to think, things come back a little. Yes, I'll go to the village tomorrow. I'll need food, anyway, and there are no provisions in the house.

LESTER DEL REY's full name is too long to fit onto this page, although a short version of it has been published in various biographical profiles, none of which the subject gives high marks to for accuracy. Perhaps one reason for this is that they're plausible, though improbable, while our valiant author himself is so unbelievable that he *must* be true. We first heard of him in 1935, when his letters began to appear in the *Brass Tacks* department of the Tremaine *ASTOUNDING STORIES*; here his name was abbreviated to "Ramon Alvarez del Rey", and the letters pulled no punches in their merciless exposure of the atrocities which various authors perpetrated as science or logical extrapolation upon the scientifically accepted. This original suggestion that del Rey was a bad man to be on the wrong side of in an argument soon became a positive certainty, and to this day he remains an ever-growing (in wisdom), lovable curmudgeon whose only worry seems to be that his endearing qualities will be mistaken for assent to imbecility—a product humanity need never worry about shortages of.

His first story, *The Faithful*, appeared in the April 1936 issue of *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION*, and at the close of that year came one which has remained among his most popular: *Helen O'Loy*. We present here his only appearance in *WEIRD TALES* —but in those days, just to have appeared once in WT was decided grounds for an author to count coup.

But that is not strange. When I arrived here, it was boarded and nailed shut, and I spent nearly an hour trying to get in. Then my feet guided me to the cellar, and it was not locked. My muscles sometimes know better than my brain. And sometimes they trick me. They would have led me deeper into the cellar instead of up the steps to this room.

Dust and dirt are everywhere, and the furniture seems about to fall apart. One might think no one had lived here for a century. Perhaps I have been away from Altdorf a long time, but surely I can't have lived away while all this happened. I'll find a mirror. There should be one over there, but it's gone; no matter, a tin pan of water will serve.

Not a mirror in the house. I used to like my reflection; and found my face fine and aristocratic. I've changed. My face is but little older, but the eyes are hard, the lips thin and red, and there is something unpleasant about my expression. When I smile, the muscles twist crookedly before they attempt my old cockiness. Sister Flanchen used to love my smile.

There is a bright red wound on my shoulder, like a burn. It must

have been the lightning, after all. Perhaps it was that cross of fire in the sky I seem to remember. It shocked my brain badly, then left me on the soggy earth until the cold revived me.

But that does not explain the condition of the house, nor where old Fritz has gone. Flamchen may have married and gone away, but Fritz would have stayed with me. I may have taken him to America with me, but what become of him then? Yes, I was going to America before . . . before something happened. I must have gone and been away longer than I look to have been. In ten years much might happen to a deserted house. And Fritz was old. Did I bury him in America?

They may know in Altdorf. The rain has stopped and there is a flush of dawn in the sky. I'll go down soon. But now I am growing sleepy. Small wonder, with all I have been through. I'll go upstairs and sleep for a little while before going to the village. The sun will be up in a few minutes.

No, fool legs, to the left! The right leads back to the cellar, not the bedroom: Up! The bed may not be the best now, but the linens should keep well, and I should be able to sleep there. I can hardly keep my eyes open long enough to reach it.

I must have been more tired than I thought, since it's dark again. Extreme fatigue always brings nightmares, too. They've faded out, as dreams do, but they must have been rather gruesome, from the impression left behind. And I woke up ravenously hungry.

It is good that my pockets are well filled with money. It would take a long time to go to Edeldorf where the bank is. Now it won't be necessary for some time. This money seems odd, but I suppose the coinage has changed while I was gone. How long have I been away?

The air is cool and sweet after yesterday's rain, but the moon is hidden. I've picked up an aversion to cloudy nights. And something seems wrong with the road to the village. Of course it would change, but it seems to have been an unusually great change for ten years or so.

Ah, Altdorf! Where the Burgermeister's house was, there is now some shop with a queer pump in front of it—gasoline. Much that I cannot recall ever seeing before, my mind seems to recognize, even to expect. Changes all around me, yet Altdorf has not changed as greatly as I feared. There is the tavern, beyond is the food store, and down the street is the wine shop. Excellent!

No, I was wrong; Altdorf has not changed, but the people have. I don't recognize any of them, and they stare at me most unpleasantly. They should be my friends; the children should run after me for sweets.

Why should they fear me? Why should that old woman cry out and draw her children into the house as I pass? Why are the lights turned out as I approach and the streets deserted? Could I have become a criminal in America? I had no leaning toward crime. They must mistake me for someone else, I do look greatly different.

The storekeeper seems familiar, but younger and altered in subtle ways from the one I remember. A brother, perhaps. "Don't run away, you fool! I won't hurt you. I only wish to purchase some vegetables and provisions. Let me see—no, no beef. I am no robber, I will pay you. See, I have money."

His face is white, his hands tremble. Why does he stare at me when I order common things? "For myself, of course. For whom else should I buy these? My larder is empty. Yes, that will do nicely."

If he would stop shaking; must he look back to that door so furtively? Now his back is turned, and his hands grope up as if he were crossing himself. Does he think one sells one's soul to the devil by going to America?

"No, not that, storekeeper. Its color is the most nauseous red I've seen. And some coffee and cream, some sugar, some—yes, some liverwurst and some of that brown sausage. I'd like some bacon, but cut out the lean—I want only the fat. Blutwurst? No, never. What a thought! Yes, I'll take it myself, if your boy is sick. It is a long walk to my place. If you'll lend me that wagon, I'll return it tomorrow . . . All right, I'll buy it.

"How much? No, of course I'll pay. This should cover it, if you won't won't name a price. Do I have to throw it at you? Here, I'll leave it on the counter. Yes, you can go."

Now why should the fool scuttle off as if I had the plague?

That might be it. They would avoid me, of course, if I had some contagious disease. Yet surely I couldn't have returned here alone, if I had been sick. No, that doesn't explain it.

Now the wine-dealer. He is a young man, very self-satisfied. Perhaps he will act sensibly. At least he doesn't run, though his skin blanches. "Yes, some wine."

He isn't surprised as much as the storekeeper; wine seems a more normal request than groceries. "No, white port; not the red. Don't look so surprised, man. White port and light tokay. Yes, that brand will do if you haven't the other. And a little cognac. These evenings are so cool. Your money . . . Very well."

He doesn't refuse the money, nor hesitate to charge double for his

goods. But he picks it up with a hesitant gesture and then dumps the change into my hand without counting it out. There must be something in my looks that the water did not reveal last night. He stands staring at me so fixedly as I draw my wagon away. Next time I shall buy a good mirror, but I have had enough of this village for the time.

Night again. This morning I lay down before sunrise, expecting to catch a little sleep before exploring the house, but again it was dark before I awoke. Well, I have candles enough; it makes little difference whether I explore the place by day or night.

Hungry as I am, it seems an effort to swallow the food, and the taste is odd and unfamiliar, as if I had eaten none of it for a long time. But then, naturally the foods in America would not be the same. I am beginning to believe that I was away longer than I thought. The wine is good, though. It courses through my veins like new life.

And the wine dispels the lurking queerness of the nightmares. I had hoped that my sleep would be dreamless, but they came again, this time stronger. Some I half remember. Flamchen was in one, Fritz in several.

That is due to my being back in the old house. And because the house has changed so unpleasantly, Fritz and Flamchen have altered into the horrible travesties I see in my dreams.

Now to look over the house. First the attic, then the cellar. The rest of it I have seen, and it is little different except for its anachronistic appearance of age. Probably the attic will be the same, though curiosity and idleness urge me to see.

These stairs must be fixed; the ladder lookstoo 'shaky to risk. It seems solid enough, though. Now the trap-door—ah, it opens easily. But what is that odor? Garlic—or the age-worn ghost of garlic. The place reeks of it; there are little withered bunches of it tied everywhere.

Someone must have lived up here once. There is a bed and a table, with a few soiled dishes. That refuse might have been food once. And that old hat was one that Fritz always wore. The cross on the wall and the Bible on the table were Flamchen's. My sister and Fritz must have shut themselves up here after I was gone. More mysteries. If that is true, they may have died here. The villagers must know of them. Perhaps there is one who will tell me. That wine-dealer might, for a price.

There is little to hold me here, unless the table drawer has secrets it will surrender. Stuck! The rust and rotten wood cannot be wrong. I must have been away more years than I thought. Ah, there it comes. Yes, there is something here, a book of some sort. *Diary of Fritz August Schmidt.*

This should give me a clue, if I can break the clasp. There should be tools in the work-room.

But first I must explore the cellar. It seems strange that the door should have been open there when all the rest were so carefully nailed shut. If I could only remember how long I've been gone!

How easily my feet lead me down into the cellar! Well, let them have their way this once. Perhaps they know more than my memory tells. They guided me here well enough before. Tracks in the dust! A man's shoe-print. Wait . . . Yes, they match perfectly; they are mine. Then I came down here before the shock. Ah, that explains the door. I came here, opened that, and walked about. Probably I was on my way to the village when the storm came up. Yes, that must be it. And that explains why my legs moved so surely to the cellar entrance. Muscular habits are hard to break.

But why should I have stayed here so long? The tracks go in all directions, and they cover the floor. Surely there is nothing to hold my interest here. The walls are bare, the shelves crumbling to pieces, and not a sign of anything unusual anywhere. No, there is something; that board shouldn't be loose, where the tracks all meet again. How easily it comes away in my hand!

Now why should there be a pit dug out behind the wall, when the cellar is still empty? Perhaps something is hidden here. The air is moldy and sickening inside. Somewhere I've smelled it before, and the association is not pleasant. Ah, now I can see. There's a box there, a large one, and heavy. Inside . . . A coffin, open and empty!

Someone buried here? But that is senseless; it is empty. Too, the earth would have been filled in. No, there is something wrong here. Strange things have gone on in this house while I have been away. The house is too old, the villagers fear me, Fritz shut himself up in the attic, this coffin is hidden here; somehow they must be connected. And I must find that connection.

This was an unusually fine coffin once; the satin lining is still scarcely soiled, except for those odd brown blotches. Mold, perhaps, though I've never seen it harden the cloth before; it looks more like blood. Evidently I'll not find my connection here. But there still remains the diary. Somewhere there has to be an answer. I'll break that clasp at once, and see if my questions are settled there.

This time, reading and work have given me no chance to sleep through the day as before. It is almost night again, and I am still awake.

Yes, the diary held the answer. I have burned it now, but I could recite it from memory. Memory! How I hate that word! Mercifully, some things are still only half clear; my hope now is that I may never remember fully. How I have remained sane this long is a miracle beyond comprehension. If I had not found the diary, things might . . . but better this way.

The story is complete now. At first as I read Fritz's scrawl it was all strange and unbelievable; but the names and events jogged my memory until I was living again the nightmare I read. I should have guessed before. The sleeping by day, the age of the house, the lack of mirrors, the action of the villagers, my appearance—a hundred things—all should have told me what I had been. The story is told all too clearly by the words Fritz wrote before he left the attic.

My plans had been made, and I was to leave for America in three days when I met a stranger the villagers called the "Night Lady." Evil things had been whispered of her, and they feared and despised her, but I would have none of their superstition. For me she had an uncanny fascination. My journey was forgotten, and I was seen with her at night until even my priest turned against me. Only Fritz and Flamchen stayed with me.

When I "died," the doctors called it anemia, but the villagers knew better. They banded together and hunted until they found the body of the woman. On her they used a hartshorn stake and fire. But my coffin had been moved; though they knew I had become a monster, they could not find my body.

Fritz knew what would happen. The old servant sealed himself and Flamchen in the attic away from me. He could not give up hopes for me, though. He had a theory of his own about the Undead. "It is not death," he wrote, "but a possession. The true soul sleeps, while the demon who has entered the body rules instead. There must be some way to drive out the fiend without killing the person, as our Lord did to the man possessed. Somehow, I must find that method."

That was before I returned and lured Flamchen to me. Why is it that we—such as I was—must prey always on those whom we loved? Is it not enough to lie writhing in the hell the usurper has made of our body without the added agonies of seeing one's friends its victims?

When Flamchen joined me in Undeath, Fritz came down from his retreat. He came willingly if not happily to join us. Such loyalty deserved a better reward. Wretched Flamchen, miserable Fritz!

They came here last night, but it was almost dawn, and they had to

go back. Poor, lustful faces, pressed against the broken windows, calling me to them! Since they have found me, they will surely be back. It is night again, and they should be here any moment now. Let them come. My preparations are made, and I am ready. We have stayed together before, and will vanish together tonight.

A torch is lit and within reach, and the dry old floor is covered with rags and oil to fire the place. On the table I have a gun loaded with three bullets. Two of them are of silver, and on each a cross is cut deeply. If Fritz is right, only such bullets my kill a vampire, and in all other things he has proved correct.

Once, I, too, should have needed the argent metal, but now this simple bit of lead will serve as well. Fritz's theory was correct.

That cross of lightning, which drove away the demon possessing my body, brought my real soul back to life, once a vampire, again I became a man. But almost I should prefer the curse to the memories it has left.

Ah, they have returned. They are tapping at the door I have unfastened, moaning their blood-lust as of old.

"Come in, come in. It is not locked. See, I am ready for you. No, don't draw back from the gun. Fritz, Flancken, you should welcome this . . ."

How peaceful they look now! Real death is so clean. But I'll drop the torch on the tinder, to make doubly sure. Fire is cleanest of all things. Then I shall join them . . . This gun against my heart seems like an old friend; the pull of the trigger is like a soft caress.

Strange. The pistol flame looked like a cross . . . Flancken . . . cross . . . so clean!



Tales From Cornwall

by David H. Keller, M. D.

(author of *The Abyss*, *Heredity*, etc.)

No. 5 The Battle Of The Toads

Although the fifth in the complete series, this was the first of the Cornwall tales to be published; and the following three chapters are in the same sequence as they were originally published in *WEIRD TALES*. We have seen touches of whimsy in the earlier chapters, as well as somewhat stronger touches of grue, but it is in the Cecil chapters that whimsy is supreme.

AS A YOUTH I SPENT SOME TIME in an Irish monastery learning to read, write and speak fluently in Latin; all of which seemed most important. From there I journeyed to the far East and lived in Arabia. I met many learned ancients who kindly taught me all they knew of alchemy, necromancy, and legerdemain. Finally, with no definite reason other than desire, I returned to the little town of Walling, in Armorica, where I had been born.

There I spent some time with my Uncle Cecil, Overlord of the Hube-laires. He was still heartbroken over the death of his only child, the lady Angelica.

ARGUMENT FROM DATES

- 200 B. C. Folkes-King Eric rules in Wearfold, Norway. Olaf is Lord of the House of Wolves in Jutland.
- 190 B. C. Balder, son of Olaf, is born.
- 189 B. C. Thyra, daughter of Eric, is born.
- 171 B. C. Balder adventures to Wearfold, kills a giant and marries Thyra.
- 140 B. C. Odin, only son of Holga, is born.
- 100 B. C. The Wolves are driven from Jutland by the Norsemen. Balder is transmuted into an oak tree. Under the command of Lord Holga the Wolves sail southwest and find a new home in Armorica.
- 99 B. C. Harold, son of Odin, is born.
- 77 B. C. Edward, son of Harold, is born.
- 56 B.C. Edward adventures to the east and marries an eagle. She lays an egg, hatches a boy, changes to a woman and calls her son Cecil.
- 57 B. C. Caesar invades Gaul. The Wolves flee to Cornwall. Lord Harold dies and his son Edward becomes Lord. The family name is changed to Hubelatre.
- 43 A.D. Claudius conquers most of England and builds the Hadrian Wall.
- 350 A.D. The Romans are driven from England.
- 400 A.D. The Hubelaires are never conquered, but repeated sieges of their castle, destruction of their lands, and frequent pestilences so weaken them that they leave Cornwall and sail to the Isle of Lundy in the Hungry Sea. Here they build a walled town and live at peace for thirty years.
- 430 A.D. The Rathlings invade Lundy and attack the Hubelaires. After long fighting with heavy losses on both sides, peace is declared; but the Rathlings remain in Lundy.
- 440 A.D. The Rathlings break the peace and kill all the Hubelaires; but Raymond the Golden, before his death, becomes the father of two sons, Raymond and Doom.
- 462 A.D. Raymond and Doom destroy the Rathlings and then sail to Armorica, where they establish the little kingdom of Walling.
- 782 A.D. Cecil is Lord of the Hubelaires in Walling. His only daughter, Angelica, dies, after destroying a giant.

"Her death is more than a personal loss," he explained. "Had she lived and married Prince Gusto and borne children the Hubelaire line would have remained unbroken. Your father was my only brother and you are his only son. You have adventured in far lands and have, perhaps, gained much wisdom. It would be well for you to live with me and, when I die, become Overlord of the Hubelaires. We are a little

people, and pride comprises most of our wealth; but our folk need a wise man to lead and care for them. It seems to me that it is your duty to prepare yourself against the time when you will be the Overlord."

"That is a kindly thought, Uncle, but I have other plans. I have talked to many of the old men of our family, and they say that once we ruled in Cornwall, where we had a mighty castle. My wish is to travel to that far land and in some way become Overlord of Cornwall, though at this time I have no idea how that can be accomplished. Because I have the determination of youth, there is nothing you can do that can change this plan."

"I regret your ambition, but it may be that you are directed in this by the gods, so I will not say you nay. Instead I shall give you a purse of gold and a parchment brought from the Isle of Lundy by our ancestor Raymond, son of Raymond the Golden. On this parchment is drawn a chart showing where family treasures were hid in the castle when our family fled from Cornwall. What these are I do not know, for their secret has been lost during the passing years. But if you find the castle you may recover them, and there is no one who has a better right to them than you. So speed on your way, and always remember that you are a Hubdaire."

Thus, in course of time, I sailed from Armorica in a little fishing boat. Whether by the seamanship of the captain or the prevailing winds, I finally landed on the coast of Cornwall. My charger, spavined, aged, thin, and blind of one eye, had not benefited by the voyage and within an hour after landing died. It being impossible for even a man of my great strength to make much headway on foot clad in armor, I sorrowfully hid most of it under some leaves, carefully marking the spot so I might recover the valuable items when opportunity permitted. Then I walked on with a dagger in my belt, and with my long sword and my shield pounding my back at every step.

In a few hours, tired and hungry, I came to a large castle centered in a green meadow. I was certain that it was the ancient home of my family and that no one, certainly none in Cornwall, had a better right to it than I had. But, to my great surprise, I found it occupied, for a peculiar-looking man in monk's clothing stood on the drawbridge, evidently waiting for me. My first thought was that he looked like a toad, and at once I was irritated by his presumption in living in the Hubdaire castle. I determined that when I ruled as Overlord of Cornwall I would at once evict him; but, at that time, I was not inclined to tell him how

I felt, for I was more in need of shelter, food, and a warm place by the fire than of an argument.

Making use of my best Latin, I explained to the monk who I was and where I had come from and assured him that I was a man of culture, meant him no harm, and was in sore need of any hospitality and refreshment he could afford me. He replied that he was the Abbe Rousseau and that the castle belonged to him, though some centuries earlier it had been possessed by an old family, who had finally deserted it. He had found it unoccupied and, with some of his friends, had taken habitation in it. He thought it would be no harm to entertain me, though as a rule strangers were never welcome. Finally he invited me to enter the castle.

It was twilight; his face was partially covered by a cowl; the pine split which he carried gave more smoke than flame. Thus, for more reasons than one, I did not glimpse his face after we had come to the banquet hall, where a fire blazed in the fireplace on one side. Leaving me there, he wended his way into the shadows and soon returned carrying a well-gnawed joint of meat, some hard bread, and a bottle of sour wine. On this feast I regaled myself with an eagerness born of hunger, rather than with the enjoyment of an epicurian.

After eating all there was I thanked my host. Now, as he stood before the fire warming his withered shins and facile hands I first saw him clearly. Those hands, dead white, with large blue veins coursing over them—those hands with long, hungry fingers and uncut nails—caused me to shiver; for the fingers moved in aimless fashion, as though alive and independent of the man they were attached to; which was a thought I had never had of the fingers of any man I had ever seen.

But stranger yet, and far more soul-rocking, was the man's face. Of course it was the face of man. It was easy to tell that it was a man who had admitted me, fed me, and now stood before the fire, ready to talk. I told myself bitterly that I was a fool to think otherwise of one who had so hospitably entertained me; yet there was something about that face, so intermittently illumined by the dancing flames, that thoroughly chilled me and made me hurriedly clutch the gold crucifix that hung around my neck—for there was something about the face of the man that reminded me of a toad.

The thin, bloodless lips were tightly compressed and stretched wide across a face that was remarkable for the receding forehead and shrunken cheeks. The skin was like parchment, thin parchment of a slightly green tinting—and now and then, as the Abbe stood in silent meditation, he

breathed into his closed mouth and puffed those thin cheeks like a fish bladder; then he looked more than ever like a toad.

Of course I could not express my thoughts. A Christian Knight, who always should try to be a gentleman, does not eat the food of a stranger, thus accepting his hospitality, and then repay him by telling him how much he looks like a toad. At least, I avoided acting that way, though there was no harm in my thinking and I most certainly thought hard.

The Abbe asked me why I was wayfaring in Cornwall, where I had spent my youth, and what experience I had in warfare. To all these questions I gave answers that had a great deal of truth in them, though I was unwilling to confide in him that I was a Hubelaire, had come to claim our ancestral home, and regarded him as an interloper who would at once be thrown out of the castle if and when I became Overlord of Cornwall. He seemed well pleased with all I had to say, and more and more he teetered on feet which seemed longer than the feet of most men; faster and faster he puffed out his cheeks, breaking into my remarks, with a strange puffing of wind which, to my excited fancy, sounded like the *croak, croak, croak* of bullfrogs at the breeding season. Then, when I came to an end he told me of himself.

"Fair sir, who say you are Cecil, son of James, grandson of David and even a descendant of Raymond, whoever he might be, but give no facts about your family or their name, you have come to Cornwall in good time and your arrival at this castle is indeed opportune. As you may have surmised, I am not a native of this wild land, nor are my friends whom you will see tonight. Some of us are from France, others from Bohemia, and a few from the far lands beyond Tartary in the deserts of Gobi; but we are all brothers, bound together by ties of blood, desire, and a great ambition which will soon be disclosed to you. Yet, while we all excel in necromancy and have knowledge of much that is weird and deadly, none is skilled in arms and the use of weapons of offense and defense. This is not due to any lack of courage—oh, believe me, Fair Sir, when I say that it is not due to any lack of courage or daring, but rather to certain physical defects which prevent us from taking part in the brave art of war, the delight of most men. So we gain our ends by other means. But tonight we must have a man who will fight for us, if there be need of fighting. I hope that such will not be the case; still, there may be need of fighting—yes, there is no doubt there will be use for a sharp sword, though it might be better were you to use your dagger."

"Oh, as for that," I replied with forced bravery, "I can use whichever

is the most needed. Personally, I prefer the two-handed sword which I carry on my back, but perhaps if there is not much room and the light is not of the best, the dagger would be the weapon of choice. Now, in previous slaying of giants I always felt that the sword was better, because there always comes a time when it is necessary to carve off their heads, and, of course, that is slow work with a dagger. Yet, in a little melee I had with a one-eyed dragon in a cave on the Canary Isle, I obtained much pleasure in blinding him with one stroke of the dagger, and the next moment the point found his heart. You would have enjoyed that little fight, Abbe and I am sure that had you seen it, you would have full confidence in my ability to handle any emergency that may arise tonight."

The Abbe smiled. "I like you. On my word, I like you. I am so impressed with you that I am almost tempted to ask you to become one of the Brethren. That may come later. But to the point of my tale: We are gathered here tonight to witness the overcoming of one of our greatest and most troublesome enemies. For centuries he has outwitted us and caused us grief. More than one of the Brethren has come to his death through the evil machinations of this fiend. But at last we have foiled him, and tonight we will kill him. Naturally, when he dies, his power will come to us; and with that additional power there is no telling to what heights of fame the Brethren will rise. We will kill him. For centuries he has boasted of his immortality, his greatness, his imperviousness to harm; yet tonight we will kill him.

"I misspoke myself. We will not kill him. I will do it! That is what pleases me so. All of us are powerful, but I am just a little stronger than the other Brothers. So I am going to kill this enemy, and when I do, I will rule all men on Earth, and perhaps those on other stars. I long to go into space, to conquer stars other than this one on which we live."

"I will kill him tonight. I have this man in a glass bottle which, by craft, I induced him to enter. Once there, he took a new shape—and was it not a pleasant thing that he took the shape he did? It gave me the power and the glory—world without end—no, no, no! I did not intend to say that—not yet, not at this time! I am not powerful enough to defy God." His voice sank to a whine. "Not yet, but perhaps in a few hours, after I have added to my power the strength of the dead fiend.

"This evil one in the bottle cannot be killed by poison, steel, fire,

water, or the prevention of breathing. There is no weapon powerful enough to destroy him; but tonight he dies. For he is inside the glass bottle and I am on the outside, and he had voluntarily assumed the shape that makes it possible for me to kill him, through the glass. Can you understand? The glass is transparent. He has to look at me. I shall look at him, and in that glance lies his death. Soon he will shrivel, grow smaller, little by little he will lose form till he lies, a few drops of slime, a twisted mass of softened bones, at the bottom of the bottle. This bottle has a glass stopper, made with the greatest cunning. In the hollow center are ashes from the bones of holy men, tears that fell from the eyes of Mary, and a drop of sweat from the brow of a tortured saint. These sacred relics of the past will hold the fiend's soul a prisoner. After he has turned to slime I will remove the stopper and suck his spirit into me. No longer having a body to dwell in, his spirit will be glad to inhabit me and thus I will have the strength, power and glory of the Great One who Once ruled Hell. Is this not clever?"

"Indeed it is," I replied, with a lilt to my voice and a nausea in the pit of me. "But why do you have me in this drama? You say my sword and dagger are useless against this Evil One."

"You will guard me, fair youth. You, who are so brave, full of desire, and longing to be someone before you die, have been sent here by fate at a most opportune moment, to protect me if I need such help. Can you not see the position I will be in? There I am, with my mouth clasped over the mouth of the bottle, all ready to breathe in the spirit that will make me the greatest of all men, living or dead. Suppose, just before I breathe, one of the Brethren—and I particularly suspect the man from Gobi—slips a dagger through my heart and takes my place as the breather-in of this great power. How horrible this would be! What a sad ending to my dreams of empire! I have planned and plotted it all and now have brought it to pass. Why should I, at the lastward, be denied the right to become Emperor of the Powerful Ones, simply because a Chinese dagger is plunged through my heart? I know you will protect me.

"Oh, promise me that you will be at my back and see to it that none of the Brethren acts wrongfully! Will you promise that? In return I will see that you are paid. What do you wish most? Gold? Power? The love of a beautiful woman? Let me look into your eyes. Oh, lovely! You are a true brother of mine, for I see that you desire a warm room, filled with a library of many books, old manuscripts and curious vellums. I will give you all of these and thus prove to you that I reward those who

help me in my hour of peril. What say you if I reward you by placing in this library a copy of *Elephantis*? Some think Nero destroyed them all, but I know where one copy is. Will you guard me if I give you all this?"

"I certainly will," I replied almost enthusiastically, as I pictured myself sitting before a warm fire enjoying *Elephantis* in a purely philosophical manner. Of course I wanted much more than a library, but I thought it unwise to mention my ambitions at this time. I was not too well acquainted with the Abbe and, after all, it is best not to be too precipitous in confidences.

The Abbe seemed pleased. He insisted on kissing me on both cheeks, after the French fashion.

I wish to say at this time, that though I had performed many brash acts of derring-do in my short life, such as subduing single-handed the Yellow Ant of Fargons (eight feet tall and very deadly in its poison) and facing undaunted the Mystic Mere Woman of the Western Seas, still the bravest moment of my life was when I withstood the toad kiss of the Abbe and did not scream; for I wanted to—oh, how I longed to howl out my fear to the listening owls and scorpions! But of course such conduct would have been unseemly in the future Overlord of Cornwall. So I smiled, and vowed him my vows and told him to be sure not to forget the copy of *Elephantis* and would he kindly refresh me with more wine before the evening's performance began?

It was later—an eternity of waiting for me, but perhaps only an hour or so in actual minutes—that we foregathered in a lower room of the castle. A light shone in the room, though where it came from was only one more thing to worry me. Near one wall was a stool, and in front of it a low table, and on that table something tall and round, covered by a square of velvet tapestry. The Abbe sat on the stool while I stood behind him fingering the handle of my favorite dagger, the ivory handle carved in the semblance of a woman. The glistening blade below her naked body had kissed more than one brave man and foul monster to death.

Then from crevices in the wall—yes, perhaps from cracks in the floor, or so it seemed to my fevered fancy—the Brethren came into being and gathered in a semicircle around the table. Their faces were toad-like, similar to the face of the Abbe. There they stood, and I said to my knees, "Remember the honor of the Hubelaires!" and I whispered to my jaws, "Be silent and remember the bravery of thy grandsire David!" but in

spite of these admonitions my knees and jaws castanetted, to my sore dismay.

From the Abbe came a croak, and a low chorus of answering croaks came from the men who stood around me. I looked into their faces and in the shifting, shimmering light saw for a certainty the same toad-like features that had so amazed me when I first saw them in the face of the Abbe. Before I could properly conceal my astonishment the Abbe took a chalice from a niche in the wall, and, after doing that which seemed rather indecorous, took it in both hands and gave each of the Brethren a drink from it. What the drink was, I, at that time, could only imagine, but later, after deep study of Satanism, I frequently shuddered at my narrow escape that night. Fortunately I was not asked to join in the draining of the cup.

Seating himself on the stool, the Abbe bade me take the cover from off the thing that was both tall and round. I did so, and there was a large glass bottle with a giant toad squatting at the bottom. There was no difficulty in seeing every part of this toad, especially his face and eyes, as the glass was of a wonderful clearness. He faced the Abbe—and the eyes of these two, one a daemon-toad and the other a man-toad, glowed ghoulishly at each other. Between them, separated by thousands of years of different thinking, conflicting ambitions, antagonistic personalities, waged a conflict of souls, such as rarely has been fought on Earth or any other place, so far as I know; though, of course, I am not all-wise concerning the other planets—or this one either, for that matter.

They glared at each other, each striving for supremacy, each trying to destroy the other. I could not see the eyes of the Abbe, but I could clearly see the eyes of the imprisoned toad were shining with supreme confidence. Did the Abbe see in them what I saw?

He must have! For he tried to escape. Three times he endeavored to arise and flee, and each time he was pulled back down on to stool and his face and eyes were drawn closer to the eyes peering at him so derisively through the clear glass wall. Then, with a low moan, the poor man slumped silently forward and even before my eyes he melted, first into a jelly and then into evil, odiferous slime running over the floor, but partly absorbed and held together by the clothing of what had once been the Abbe Rousseau.

As he died, the toad inside the bottle grew larger and assumed human shape. He turned around slowly in the bottle, and, in his turning, looked at each of the Brethren and after that look they stood still, unable to

move, and over the face of each dropped the hideous mask of uttermost despair. Now the man in the bottle looked at me. Well, let him look all he wanted to! I was holding fast to my cross and I knew the power of the cork to hold him inside his crystal prison. If his glare became too powerful I could shut my eyes; at least I thought I could.

But those eyes did not try to harm me. They seemed kindly and gentle. Then the man raised his arms in the air three times and his lips made three definite and magical movements. Interested and amazed I recalled that appeal for help, having learned it in Araby when I was raised from the grave by the lion's grip, the Lion of the House of Judah. What could the man mean by giving me this sign? Was it a coincidence? An accident? Or was he indeed a frater of mine?

Of course I knew what he wanted, so I pulled out the cork.

He passed through the neck of the bottle and jumped to the floor, a small man dressed in black velvet, with glistening hair and a most pleasing smile, which in some way warmed my heart and removed much of my apprehension.

He paid no attention to me but passed slowly in front of the toad-faced Brethren, and as he passed they moaned in anguish and, falling on their faces before him, tried to kiss his feet. It was this act of adoration that caused me to look at his feet; and, utterly astonished, I saw they were hoofed and hairy, like those of a goat.

Finally he passed all the Brethren and, turning, made a sign, at which their ending was in all respects like that of the Abbe. They too turned to slime, naught being left on the floor save their clothing and the toad-juice oozing from it. Then he came to where I was standing, braced against the wall to keep from falling, and he said merrily: "Well, Cæcil, my good fellow and rare sib, how goes the evenings?"

"Pleasant enough," I replied, "with first one *divertissement* and then another. In fact, it has been profitable for me in many ways."

"Lad," he said kindly, gripping me by the shoulder, and in that grip was the warmth of human comradeship, "you showed rare discernment in releasing me from that bottle. Of course I could have broken it, but there was something about your face that pleased me and I wanted to test you. I found that you also had been in the East, in Araby, and when I asked for help you gave it. These toad-men have worried me for years. I have tried to destroy them, for they hurt my cause; but never till to-night, and then only by outwitting them, could I gather them together in one room. There is only one left, and I do not think he will trouble me. I warrant that the Abbe was surprised. He had experimented and

killed many a real toad, but, of course, I was not a toad, just had the appearance of one for the time being. Well, that is over with and I can go back to better and happier occupations. But you really did let me out, and, perhaps, the magic of the cork was stronger than I thought. So I will grant you three requests, my dear sib—ask for anything you desire."

My heart was in my mouth but, nevertheless, I spoke up bravely. "Give me the power to conquer all giants, robbers, knaves, salamanders, ogres, serpents, dragons and all evil things, male and female, on, beneath and above Earth wherever and whenever I come into conflict with them."

"That is a lot of power, but I will grant it."

"Then, in this castle I want a library, a very fine one. A very long time ago a woman wrote a book called *Elephantis*. I would like that book in the library."

The man laughed. "I heard the Abbe tell you about that book. Do you know that I was well acquainted with the girl who wrote it? In fact I put some of the facts contained in that book into her head. Well, I will give you the library and the book. Have you no desire for temporal power?"

"Yes. This castle we are in, though part ruins, was once the home of my family, the Hubelaires. I would like to have it restored to its former grandeur and to live in it as the Overlord of Cornwall."

"That is a simple matter to arrange, a mere bagatelle." Then he opened his closed hand and in the palm lay a golden key strung on a black silk cord. This he suspended around my neck, saying, "This is the sign patent of your authority. Always remember the words on it:

**THEY WHO HOLD THE GOLDEN KEY
SHALL EVER LORDS OF CORNWALL-BE.**

Guard it well if you wish to remain Overlord. Now I really must be on my way. I wish you a long life and a merry one." Immediately he vanished, amid the hooting of owls.

All around me stirred new life in stone and plaster. I walked slowly through the long halls, now clean of the dust of centuries. Finally I came to the banquet hall, where men-at-arms awaited my command and little pages ran to ask me my desires.

Walking slowly, as in a dream, I mounted the winding stairway and climbed to the topmost tower. There I met a sturdy warrior, standing

watch over the safety of the castle. It was a beautiful night, starlighted and with a full moon. Far down the winding road came the blare of trumpets and the pleasant music of horses' hooves on the hard clay and the ringing clash of sword against armor at each step of a charger. Now and then, mingled with the noise of many men, came the peal of women's laughter.

"What means this cavalcade advancing toward the castle?" I gruffly asked the warrior.

"These be the great men of Cornwall, with their ladies and knights and all their men-at-arms, who wend their way through the night to bid you welcome to Cornwall and humbly acknowledge you as their Overlord," he replied, smiling.

"That is as it should be," I made answer. "Go and command that all be prepared against their coming. And, when they arrive, bid the nobles to come to me. They will find me in the library."



Harry Protagonist, Undersec For Overpop

by Richard Wilson

RICHARD WILSON may have been the very first science fiction fan to have an entire issue of his publication lost in the mails, which is what happened to one number of *ESCAPE*. There are those who suspect that one reason why no copies reached subscribers is that it was never published in the first place—Wilson couldn't get that issue out on schedule, so called it the next one, with a higher number. Nonetheless, certain fans claim to have been given copies by RW himself, if we are to believe published comments on that rare issue.

Be that as it may, the Wilson whimsy and light touch that was evident as early as 1937/38 has remained with him, and I cannot recall any Wilson tales which were less than entertaining to read. Well deserved recognition came to him this year (1969) when the Science Fiction Writers of America voted his story, *Mother of the World*, worthy of a Nebula.

HARRY PROTAGONIST, Undersecretary for Overpopulation, got a final briefing from his advisers and then, as November 12, 2026 dawned, went into emergency session with the Planetary Chiefs.

He formally reminded them of what they well knew: the situation had become impossible; Earth would breed itself out of existence by midnight.

At the tick of 12:01 a.m. on November 13, as forecast so long ago, the population of Earth would reach 50 billion, or 10,000 people per square mile, and Doomsday would be at hand.

It was no good blaming anyone or anything—penicillin, DDT, seat belts, the Catholic Church, drive-in movies, the fecundity of high-school drop-outs, the inadequacy of saran wrap—it was no longer a matter of prevention but of cure.

It was too late now for anti-natalism or any other euphemism for birth control.

Harry Protagonist told the Chiefs that what was needed, and needed before sundown, was a drastic remedy like a good world war, or a fast-spreading plague, or a global catastrophe, to get the population back down to a reasonable number of billions.

The international bankers spoke out unanimously against World War III, arguing that it would ruin too much real estate.

So would in all-out catastrophe, they said.

The Chiefs, all knowledgeable men who'd read Malthus and Vogt and Bates, not to mention Sanger and Huxley and Cook, already knew it would be no solution to increase the migration of colonists to other planets—more than half a century ago it had been shown that, merely to keep Earth's population stationary then, 7,000 people would have to be shipped out every hour, 24 hours a day.

There weren't that many spaceships, then or now.

What about nerve gas, somebody asked, and Harry Protagonist had to explain that you couldn't be selective about that—you got everybody in the area, just as if you'd dropped a non-discriminating bomb.

Some were more favorably disposed toward a plague—provided it were selective and didn't carry off the wrong people, such as members of their immediate families or valued business associates.

Harry Protagonist had done his homework and knew what not to recommend.

There was really no need to destroy property, he told them, or to loose bacteria which might become uncontrollable.

Why not put it on the honor system?

He recalled that in the old days there had been a program to wipe out illiteracy—"Each one teach one."

Harry Protagonist said his proposal was just as simple—"Each one kill one."

Let each man vow to kill a close member of his family, Harry said. Uxoricide is what it came down to—the murder of one's wife.

Harry Protagonist, a bachelor, had thought it through carefully and it was clear which set of spouses would have to be eliminated.

It was a matter of economics; person for person, women carried the least insurance.

Obviously the wholesale death of heavily-insured males would never win the approval of insurance companies and *their* valued business associates.

As a further argument, Harry noted that many of the executed wives would take with them unborn children, a bonus in the form of retro-active birth control.

At this point the Planetary Chiefs rejected as being in bad taste the suggestion of one business leader that trading stamps be given to uxoricidal hubbies, with double stamps going to those who, as he put it, disposed also of unborns.

Nevertheless the Chiefs, only some of whom were widowers or bachelors, agreed to promulgate Harry's uxoricide decree at once and sent their enforcement committees to oversee it.

But it was amazing how little the enforcers had to do.

With the aura of law ennobling their terrible acts, the husbands, for the most part, fell to with a will.

There wasn't as much grumbling as might have been expected, and some of them chose rather ingenious ways.

A relatively underpopulated Earth greeted November 13, 2026, which dawned clear and cool.

Vast numbers of widowers, assured by the enforcers of getting reconditioned homes of value equal to those which they had recently vacated because of unfortunate memories connected with them, were out early, wife hunting among the unmarried ladies, many of whom seemed inclined to overlook the unpleasantness which had made these males available for matrimony.

Others among the new widowers, however, gathered as a noisy crowd outside Harry Protagonist's house.

They shouted for him to come out and occasionally sang an old song, *We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again*.

These several dozen widowers had something in common.

Each had discovered that his wife had been heavily insured and that not he but Harry Protagonist, selective adulterer, was the beneficiary.

So they shouted for Harry Protagonist, Undersec for Overpop, to come out.

He did, apparently under the impression that he was to be honored for having saved Earth from extinction.

He soon learned that their intention was somewhat different.

But he bought off the widowers by giving them the insurance money and taking a marriage broker's fee for promising to find them suitable new wives.

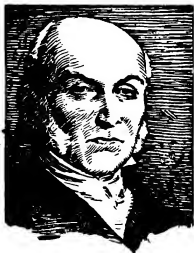
Harry Protagonist felt he'd got out of it pretty well, considering that the widowers had been planning to reduce Earth's population by one more.

Slumber

by ROBERT E. HOWARD

A silver scroll against a marble sky,
A brooding idol hewn of crimson stone,
A dying queen upon an ebon throne,
An iron bird that rends the clouds on high,
A golden lute whose echoes never die—
A thousand dreams that men have never known
Spread mighty wings and fold me when alone
Upon my couch in haunted sleep I lie.

Then rending mists, the spurring whisper comes:
"Wake, dreamer, wake, your trust with Life to keep!"
Yet, waking, still a throb of phantom drums
Comes hauntingly across the mystic deep;
Their echo still my thrilling soul chord thrums—
Which is the waking, then, and which the sleep?



by
Theodore
Roscoe

Speak For
Yourself,
John Quincy

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THEODORE ROSCOE was one of those old-time pulpeters who had the knack of putting some bizarre element into almost every story he wrote, whether it was straight adventure, detective, western, foreign legion, and whatever. Had *WEIRD TALES* been able to match rates with his other markets, I think he would have appeared there more often. As it was, though, we saw him twice: *The Dancing Death* (October 1928) and *The Curse Kiss* (February 1930). Three of his most thrilling tales, *A Grave Must be Deep*, "*Z*" is for *Zombie*, and *War Declared*, ran as serials in *ARGOSY*; and Farnsworth Wright was so taken by the first of those three, in 1935, that when he printed Aalla Zaata's *A Grave is Five Feet Deep*, what you'll see on the contents page of the July 1935 issue is the title of the Roscoe novel.

Boston, dear old Boston—

The Home of the Bean and the Cod—

Where the Lowells speak only to the Adamses,

And the Adamses only to God—

With apologies to E. St. V. Millay

CHAPTER I His Crusty Excellency

NOW JOHN QUINCY ADAMS was a great man, the son of a great man, and the father of great men. For the past hundred and fifty years the name Adams has been "up there" in the United States. When the country wanted great lawyers, great teachers, great writers, great thinkers, great legislators it went to the Adamses to get them.

Those who believe in heredity say it's a matter of heredity— and good blood, family tree, and all that.

Those who believe in environment say it's a matter of environment— New England, Boston, and whatnot.

Anyway and whatever, John Quincy was one of the greatest of his line—lawyer, writer, teacher, and diplomat, statesman and sixth President of the United States all rolled into one. He could talk like a charm— Old Man Eloquent, they called him— and write most fascinatingly. He could play diplomatic poker without stacking a card, and win from the fastest, crookedest gamblers in Europe. In the White House and Congress

afterward he was always a scholar and a gentleman. He was devoted to his family, and he loved and did a lot for his country.

Why, he had the longest service record of any man in American history, for at the age of nine he was cheering the militiamen at the Battle of Bunker Hill, and seventy-one years later he had a seat in the House not far from Abraham Lincoln's. He was the only one of our ex-Presidents to die on duty in the Capitol.

Naturally, with a name like that and a record like that, he was proud. Proud? Just look at the portrait photograph of him (the one featured in the Daguerretype exhibit at the New York Metropolitan Art Museum) if you want to see pride! Sitting there in his velvet-collared dress-coat with his hands folded and his knees crossed; bald headed; white feathers on his jaws; tight-lipped and frosty eyed; ready to stand right up, young man, and let you know he was still going strong and an Adams! He was eighty-one years old when that photograph was made, and it was made in 1848 just before he died with his boots on, there in the House.

So he wasn't at all surprised to see that picture of himself in the Passport being examined at the Frontier Station.

"Yes, sir, that's my tintype," he admitted a little crustily, for he was somewhat annoyed that a man of his position and prominence should be held up for a passport examination, instead of being put right through with a diplomat's immunity. The room was bare-walled and draughty and uncomfortable, like any frontier way station, and he felt grumpy and impatient, for he'd always chafed at red tape and niggling delays.

"That's me. John Quincy Adams." Then he couldn't help puffing his chest a trifle. "I'm the first American President ever to've had his picture taken."

The Emigration Official looked over his glasses and smiled. "Quite a likeness. Quite a likeness, Mr. Adams. Some of these Passport photographs aren't apt to be so good." He turned to the next page of the document, nodding. "Let's see. You were born Quincy, Massachusetts, 1767. English descent. Grandfather was a cobbler. Hmmm. Which Adams was your father?"

John Quincy scuffed an impatient boot under his chair. "John Adams, Second President of the United States, was my father. Samuel was a distant cousin. My mother's name Abigail. Wife's name Louisa. It's all down there in black and white."

"So it is," said the Emigration Official, smiling at the shaky handwriting and ignoring John Quincy's crustiness because he was such a

venerable old customer. "So. Your sons were George and John and Charles Francis. One daughter—died in Petrograd. Grandsons: Henry Adams and—mmm—hmm—well, they certainly go on. Now that's quite a family, isn't it? Yes, sir, quite a family."

"One of the best in the United States of America," said John Quincy Adams, squaring up. "Or Europe, or anywhere else, for that matter."

"And you've got a mighty long service record down here, Mr. Adams. Well! Minister to almost every country in Europe; Senate; Secretary of State under James Monroe, President; then all those years afterward in Congress—hardly room to list all of it in the Passport."

"Longest record of anybody in American public life," John Quincy declared with emphasis. "You ought've heard the things they said about me on my last tour in the United States—that trip I made across upper New York. Why, at Buffalo and Rochester they cheered me for an hour. Sort of evened up some of the slanders I suffered when I was President."

"Don't know when a better record has come through," agreed the Emigrations Official. "Distinguished career. Full, useful life. Fine wife—fine sons—celebrated family. Remarkable record!" His smile across the desk-top invited confidence. "Come, how would you account for your success, Mr. Adams? Heredity? Environment? Or what?"

"Well, I didn't know as I'd have to account for it." John Quincy Adams sat up a little defensively. He was never the one to blurt out a first-hand answer; he liked a minute or two to think things over, liked to size up a question and the man who asked it, and then frame an honest reply. Now he considered his questioner a trifle suspiciously, diplomatically on guard.

He'd been through customs offices before, and this Frontier Station didn't seem any different from the rest of them, only the circumstances were a little peculiar. He wasn't familiar with the country he was going to; in fact his destination was uncertain. He didn't know if he'd brought the right clothes. Then the room was dim because there was a thick, whitish fog outside; everything was sort of blurred in an atmosphere he wasn't used to, and he couldn't make out this Emigration Official very well.

But the eyes regarding him were kindly; the smile reassuring. The Emigration Official's voice was friendly, explaining, "You Adamses are so famous in the States. Perhaps you don't realize you've become such an example to the savants. They point to your heritage and your long line of front-rank citizens to prove their theories of inheritance."

"Humph! Well, I don't know that I hold with all these theories

about heredity. Of course I believe in it as far as my sons are concerned, and I do come from good sound stock. But I don't hold with the English and their theories of blue blood and all, for our Democracy says every man's created free and equal, and I'm not forgetting my grandfather was a shoemaker," said John Quincy Adams.

"Then how about environment?" inquired the Emigration Official. "Do you attribute your success to that?"

"New England and Massachusetts may be the best environment in the world. But last year there was a man alongside me in Congress who was raised on the dirt floor of a backwoods cabin, with no family tree but those in the surrounding forest, and what you'd think was no good environment at all. I'm speaking of Honest Abe Lincoln."

"Abraham Lincoln." The Emigration Official nodded. "It would seem as if he scotches these pat theories of environment and heredity."

"My father and mother were wonderful people," John Quincy Adams went on. "I had the best sort of home, educational chances. But there's that long backwoodsman with no home to speak of, and never within miles of a college, now in Congress. Last analysis, I'd say a man is just about what he makes of himself. Riches can be as big a handicap as poverty. Having a great man for a father can sometimes be a handicap. How many sons of great men do you know who turned out to be as great as their father?"

"Not many," said the Emigration Official.

"Being son of a President," John Quincy pointed out, "isn't easy. My father was a hard man to keep up with—almost gave me a case of inferiority—had to learn to stand on my own. Folks thought I was favored, being a President's son; several times I had to refuse appointments that I'd won by my own efforts."

"But you went ahead on your own, then, Mr. Adams?"

"Studied my schoolbooks, and was diligent." John Quincy nodded, square-jawed. "Kept my mind always occupied, and worked from dawn to dark. My father took me all around Europe when I was a boy, but I studied my lessons instead of gallivanting around like other lads."

"Saved your money and went to church, too?"

"Never was a spendthrift—wore this same hat I've got for ten years," said John Quincy. "And I used to read the Bible from cover to cover twice a year."

"And you didn't do things underhanded. Honest as rock, the record says."

"Honesty's the best policy," said John Quincy Adams firmly: "I guess

everybody knew how I stood on an issue. You can see how I broke with the Federalist Party. Always ready to let politics go hang when they got in the way of my principles, sir."

"Boil it down, then, you'd say a man is the captain of his fate and the master of his soul?" was the question.

"That's what I'd say," said John Quincy Adams.

"That he shapes his own destiny? A self-made man?"

"Success or failure—I'd say it was up to the man himself."

"Then you're proud of what you achieved for yourself, is that it, Mr. Adams?"

"And who do you know could be prouder of his record?" John Quincy asked, ruffling and squinting. "And may I ask what these personal questions are leading up to?"

"Well, I'd like to show you something," said the Emigration Official, smiling quietly. "Look a moment, John Quincy Adams. Did you ever see one of these?"

CHAPTER II The Past-Catcher

ALL IN ALL IT WAS QUEER, for John Quincy had seen a lot strange things in his life, but he had to admit he'd never seen one of those. In America or Europe, in all his long career and travels he'd never seen such an object before.

The Emigration Official took it carefully out of a drawer, and placed it on the desk-top in front of John Quincy; and John Quincy Adams stared, puzzled. One way, it resembled a microscope, and in another way it resembled a telescope, and again it bore resemblance to one of those stereoscopes your grandmother used to keep on her parlor table. At the same time it was a little like a magic lantern, and in another aspect it looked like a penny arcade peep-movie machine.

The Emigration Official fiddled with focus-screws and adjusted dials and injected a glass slide.

"You've never seen anything like this before," he told John Quincy, "because in America it hasn't been invented yet. You've seen some wonderful inventions in your lifetime, John Quincy—steam engines and oil lamps, paddlewheel boats and photographic cameras, the first Iron Horse and David Bushnell's submarine. But there's a long way to go before they come to this. There's the Edison light and the X-ray, the gramophone and the telephone, the moving picture and the radio and television and a host of marvels before they arrive at this."

"What is it?" John Quincy squinted, interested. "I've never heard of those last things you mentioned. What is this contraption?"

The Emigration Official looked up and smiled. "It's a Past-catcher."

"A Past-catcher!" John Quincy scowled in incomprehension.

"Sort of a combination of those other things I mentioned," explained the Emigration Official. "Pretty complicated to go into the workings, but it has to do with the fourth dimension, and something they're going to call the time ray. You know, Mr. Adams, light and sound travel on waves through the atmosphere. Events travel much the same way. Something happens on Earth—an event. The sound waves and vision waves of that event go traveling on and on out into space. To eternity."

"Like echoes and such." John Quincy gestured.

"Exactly. Say you're sitting on the North Star, then," the Emigration Official pointed out of the window, "looking at Earth through a spy-glass. That old star is trillions of miles from Earth. Quintrillions of miles. Now on Earth it's the Fourth of July: someone fires off a gun. The echo and the flash of that event start traveling.

"But the North Star's so far away, it takes those light and sound waves years to get there. Maybe a century later that gun-flash and echo reaches you. Meantime on Earth a hundred years have gone by. But the North Star is behind time, so to speak. You'd be seeing an event that had happened on Earth in the past."

The Emigration Official pointed to a wall-map of the zodiac, drew out his watch. "Things that happened way back in Caesar's day haven't reached the North Star yet. On Polaris you'd be seeing them building the pyramids."

John Quincy cupped his hand to his ear. "And what's this machine here to do with the pyramids?"

"No more than with any other past events," said his instructor. "But it's a Past-catcher—captures all the past events that are traveling on and on out through space. You tune in, as we call it, to some event that's happened; and this machine, to put it simply, captures the sound waves and the light waves of that past time, and brings the event back into focus. Like this," said the Emigration Official, twisting a screw and putting his eye to an eyepiece. "Here. Take a look at this."

Well, John Quincy Adams was pretty skeptical, as who wouldn't be? But he'd always taken an interest in scientific things, and he put his blue eye to the eyepiece. Then he got a shock. That machine was fizzing like one of old Ben Franklin's electrical experiments, only it wasn't

an electrical jolt but an emotional one that shocked John Quincy Adams.

Looking into that eye-piece, or peep-hole, he saw a little scene on a film—such a scene as you might see today on a television screen. The picture had motion, and it was in technicolor, and the machine was wired for sound, too. And what John Quincy Adams saw was a boy in a room—a lad in quaint knee-breeches and old-fashioned ruffled shirt and buckled shoes, bent over and writing busily with a quill pen at an antique desk.

The room was strangely furnished with damask draperies, ikons, and silver samovars. Candles guttered on the table, and snow fell like lace curtains at the windows. He could even see an onion-spired building silhouetted against wintry sky, and a frosty moon and the icesheen of a distant river.

"Why, that's me!" he cried, unable to believe his eye. "Me, when I was fourteen years old and secretary to the Russian Legation in Petrograd!"

"Interesting, isn't it?" asked the Emigration Official. "Yes sir, that's you back in 1781—just a boy in the foreign service in Russia. Can you hear the scratching of the pen?"

Listening astonished, John Quincy could not only hear the scratching of the quill; he could hear the log fire and the cry of wind at the panes and in some far-below quarter of the house voice singing. He saw himself there in the room alone; he was writing very fast, for the hour was late and the room was chilly and he should have been long abed. He saw himself in his hurry blot the writing paper.

"I didn't say that!" he protested to the Emigration Official.

"You did." The Official chuckled over his shoulder. "Everything you witness here is just as it happened in the past."

Old John Quincy marveled at that scene of himself recaptured from long ago, and then, as the novelty and wonderment of it wore off, he felt a considerable admiration for the boy in that picture. The lad was so tired he could scarcely keep awake. His eyelids and shoulders would droop, and he had to prop himself up with sips of black Russian coffee. Books and documents were strewn about, and a dozen candle-stubs attested to long working hours.

"I told you I was always industrious," old John Quincy observed proudly. "See how I'm working while everyone else is having a party. Diligent. At my desk overtime. That's how I came to be Legation secretary when I was only fourteen."

The lad in the scene wrote furiously, then paused to pull at knuckles stiff from writer's cramp.

"That was a mighty hard job," old John Quincy recalled. "Had to apply myself every minute. See! I'm writing out a speech for the minister. Organizing his material. Why," his voice rose excitedly, "it's that important address to be given to the czar's councillors."

"We'd just won the Revolution in America and were hoping for recognition from Russia. If Russia recognized our government, the other European powers would follow suit. It all depended on that speech, and most of the preparation was left up to me. Can you see what an important job I was doing?" He stared into the Past-catcher admiringly. "America had to have Russia's recognition, and it was my work on that paper when I was only fourteen that put it over!"

"That was a delicate negotiation," the Emigration Official noted. "You might say the history of America depended on it?"

"At the time, our whole foreign policy depended on it!"

"A pretty big load for a boy's shoulders to carry," the Emigration Official murmured.

"They trusted me!" Old John Quincy's eye gleamed at the eye-piece. "I was just a nipper, but I could handle international diplomacy with the best of them."

"And you did that job all by yourself, Mr. Adams?"

"If I do say so," old John Quincy said. "You can see how I'm working at my desk there alone."

"But you were not alone," the Emigration Official said softly. "Observe." He adjusted a focus-screw. "Watch the scene closely. Watch by that gabled back window."

The window in that scene was behind the lad's back. Fourteen-year-old John Quincy couldn't see it, but old John Quincy, glaring into the Past-catcher, could see it very well because Past-catchers are four-dimensional and show all sides of what went on. Old John Quincy watched the back window in that scene, sharp-eyed; then he pulled a quick, sharp breath.

"Why, there's someone out there!" he exclaimed. "Someone is standing on that balcony outside!"

"Was standing on that balcony," the Emigration Official corrected. "Remember, the event you're witnessing happened in the past. But soft. There are two prowlers. Listen, and you'll hear them talking."

Sure enough, there were two on that outside balcony—two furtive, shadowy figures. They wore long greatcoats and tall fur hats, and they

were booted like Cossacks and creeping up to the casement like Russian bears. Standing at the window frame, they pawed the snow-curtains aside, and one rubbed at the frosty pane with his mitten and peered into the room. In the outwash of candlelight their faces came into view. One was thin with a drizzly black beard, and the other was fat with a tremendous red beard; and the eyes of the two men were curiously similar—a light, hard green, penetratingly sharp.

"Ah, Nishkin," said the black-beard to his companion, "there he is! Bones of Saint Stanislaus of Zmeinogorsk! He is only a boy!"

The red-bearded one nodded, peering in. "And writing. Always writing."

Those guttural Russian voices made old John Quincy's hair go up, but the boy, engrossed at the writing desk, did not hear that pair outside the window. Young John Quincy heard only the quill and the wind and the firelog and the voices singing in a distant quarter of the house. He bit his pen thoughtfully; then bent to scribbling again, his boyish cue bobbing up and down on his necknape as he wrote.

"He cannot hear us," murmured the black-whiskered Russian, nudging his companion. "No one will hear us. There is a banquet downstairs, and they are singing. Now is our chance."

Red-beard chuckled. "I am ready when you give the word, Goranoff. This is easier than I expected."

Old John Quincy pulled back from the eyepiece, aghast. "My God, they're going to kill him," he cried to the Emigration Official. "I mean, they're going to kill *me*! That dirty red-whiskered scoundrel has a knife in his clutch. The gaunt black one is priming a horsepistol!"

"Watch! Watch!" was the breathless reply. "Keep your eye on the scene and you'll see what happened."

Panting, squinting, horrified, old John Quincy pasted eye to eyepiece and watched in amazement and consternation. On that snowy balcony the red-whiskered one was grinning, his strange green eyes alight. The one called Goranoff, having cocked his horsepistol, was crouched ready to spring.

"Ready, Niskin?"

"Aye, Goranoff. Ready."

"I will throw wide the window. You leap in fast."

"Faster than he can cry out, Goranoff. Faster than the Devil."

"If he moves, I will shoot him through the head. If he doesn't, you will cut his throat. Understood?"

"It is understood."

"Then it is one-two-three, go!" snarled Goranoff. "One! Two—"

Old John Quincy could hardly stand it. Young John Quincy at that writing desk didn't hear a thing. Hewassscribbling busily when that killer on the balcony whispered, "Three!" and grabbed for the windowlatch, and old John Quincy wanted to yell out wildly and warn the unsuspecting boy of the danger.

"Murder!" the old man gasped, grabbing at the box-shaped machine as if to catch the assassins envisioned on the screen. Then, peering, he couldn't help but shout. Just as Goranoff touched the window latch, it happened. A rumbling roar, like thunder in the winter's night. A basso tumult that came down from the roofs above that balcony; then *whoosh! crash!*

Old John Quincy saw young John Quincy leap up at the roar of the snow-slide. But he saw what young John Quincy hadn't seen—that booming white avalanche burst over the balcony like an explosion; two dark figures leaping for the icy balcony rail; the figures caught and enveloped as if in a down-tumbling glacier. That avalanche went over them as they went over the rail; engulfed, they fell forty feet into a courtyard and were buried under a hill of ice and snow.

The picture faded as young John Quincy shrugged and turned back to his writing desk. Old John Quincy didn't shrug. Mopping his forehead, he leaned back from the Past-catcher and glared at the Emigration Official as if the event he'd witnessed had just happened.

"I remember hearing that snow-slide," he said hoarsely. "But those murderers—I never knew they were out there! Great Glory! they might have slain me!"

"So they might," said the Emigration Official. "Very easily."

"They wanted the papers," old John Quincy panted. "That document I was working on! They were Anarchists, and they wanted to kill me and steal those papers and ruin our American negotiations with Russia. Why, thunderation! Our whole European policy might've been wrecked!"

"That was close," came the smiling answer. "But you'll recall this next incident even better, although I doubt if you realized at the time it was such a narrow escape. See it for yourself in the Past-catcher. Take a look at this."

CHAPTER III By Coach To Jeopardy

LOOKING INTO THAT MACHINE was like looking at the scene of a play; when the view came into focus it was rather like a curtain going up. Act two: The scenery had changed. Old John Quincy found himself staring at an evening landscape, a turnpike winding through a peaceful countryside of fields and streams and woods. There was a woodcutter's cottage at one road-bend; a style at another, and a cross-roads where a signpost pointed, *To London*.

"The London Post Road!" gasped John Quincy Adams.

He remembered that turnpike, remembered it well. He'd traveled it in 1795 when, as the young American minister of twenty-seven, he'd been ordered by George Washington to go to Holland by way of London where he was to deliver some important papers to John Jay at the Court of St. James's.

"It was my first big mission," old John Quincy cried, glaring at that post-road scene. "Those papers were so important Washington wouldn't let anyone else carry them. The British were making trouble, and those secret instructions had to reach Jay or the United States would be in a dangerous mess. Washington told me to deliver them at all costs. Foreign agents wanted to steal them, but I got them to London, all right. I used my wits!"

"How was that?" the Emigration Official asked quietly.

"I left the boat ahead of time and went to London incognito by a roundabout way. That's the road I took to London."

He bent over the eyepiece excitedly; he had every reason to remember that London Post Road.

The scene blurred a little as the machine crackled and fizzed; then it came back clear as a painting, a brown road stretching through green woods in twilight.

"Look," said the Emigration Official, "do you see the coach, Mr. Adams? Do you see it coming?"

Yes, blinking hard into the eyepiece, John Quincy could see the stage-coach—far in the distance, a rolling cloud of dust advancing through the pastoral twilight. Pretty soon he could make out the vehicle, four horses, lathered and galloping; the top-hatted driver on the high, swaying seat; the guard on the tally-ho seat behind. Up hill and down dale came the careening stage, growing larger and larger on John Quincy's

vision. He could hear it approaching, too: the whip-cracks, the creak of harness, the rattle of rolling wheels.

He stared hard at that picture on the television screen, and then he could see within the stagecoach—a close-up of the passengers. There were five men crowded together, beefy Englishmen in the costumes of the time, and a young man crowded into a corner, all hunched up with books and baggage and a pad on his knees. The young man was trying to write, but having a difficult time, for the coach was jolting like anything and his companions jostled him, and the coach was stuffy with dust and British conversation and pipesmoke.

"Hi, Alf, an' when shall we get to Lonnon?" asked one of the passengers for the dozenth time.

The traveler at the young man's elbow made a great fuss at pulling out his watch. "'Arf hour late now, an' it's getting dark. Won't be there till well on midnight, I expect."

The young man, jostled, looked up annoyed.

The young man was John Quincy Adams, himself.

He bent to his scribbling, biting the pencil and trying to concentrate, and the close-up altered into a picture of the careening stagecoach. The driver swore and laid about with his whip as the horses pounded around a turn; then there was the screech of brakes, and "Whoa, Joe! Whoa!" as the stage pulled up before the woodcutter's cottage where there was a roadside trough for water.

Young John Quincy Adams looked out of the coach-window briefly, then returned to his jotting. Old John Quincy Adams, staring into the Past-catcher, muttered under his breath.

"I remember stopping at that watering trough. I was smart to pick a backcountry stage without a lot of crowded waystops."

"Listen to what's said," the Emigration Official touched old John Quincy's shoulder. "Then keep your eye on that woodcutter's cottage."

The stagecoach driver, draping the reins across his knees, looked around in the dusk, then turned to the guard on the perch behind. "Hey, Percy. Looks like the woodcutter ayn't at 'ome."

The guard, who sat with his arms folded carelessly and his boots hoisted up, nodded and looked toward the cottage without interest. He was a tough-looking customer, the guard. With his tricorne hat pulled down, his brace of pistols in his belt and a black patch over one eye, he resembled a pirate on the lofty sterndeck of a ship. His one good eye was a queer shade of green.

"Ayn't no smoke from his chimney," remarked the driver. "Might be he's chopped off a toe, like he did last Easter. Might be he's sick."

"More likely he's gone to th' fair," said the guard, shrugging. "Why be a worry-wort? Th' blighter's off havin' a good time."

The cottage under the trees was dark, and the guard's good eye under his down-pulled hatbrim was darker. The driver didn't notice it, and turned his attention to the thirsty horses. Young John Quincy Adams, writing inside the stagecoach, didn't notice it. But old John Quincy watching breathlessly into the Past-catcher, noticed it and wondered what the devil. Then he saw exactly what happened.

With much gee-hawing, whip crackings and, "Giddap!" with the strain of harness and clatter of hoofs, the heavy stage got under way. Just as it started off, two shadowy figures raced from around behind the dark woodcutter's cottage, and, sprinting out to the road, caught the tail-board of the lurching stage.

From the way they ran, low-bent, furtive, they looked like highway-men, each clutching a pistol. The driver, busy with whip and reins, didn't see them. The passengers in the coach didn't see them. But the guard on his rear perch saw them—not only saw them, but leaned down, reaching to give them a hand.

Yes, Percy with the eyepatch leaned down to help those two climb aboard; there was a dizzy minute with the dust and pebbles flying when it looked as if those road-runners weren't going to catch on; then each got a handhold and they hung for dear life on the back of the swaying coach. Only the guard knew they were riding back there, blind-baggage.

* "Old on!" his thick voice was just audible above the clattertiban of the wheels. "Grab a-holt of that luggage. I'll fetch ye aloft soon as there's a chance."

Several cowhide trunks and some carpet bags were lashed to the luggage-rack on the coach's rear; the top was piled high with baggage, and the guard could converse with these riders without fear of the driver's detection. Sweating, tight-jawed, they clung to the luggage-rack, almost lost from view in the twilight and dust. It was extraordinary that the guard should let them steal a ride like that. What was more extraordinary, one of those riders was a thin, dark man very elegantly clad, his weskit covered with gold watchchains and earrings in his ears; and old John Quincy recognized him with a yell.

"Why, that's Falcon! The famous English gambler! Played on all the

trans-Atlantic vessels! I met him on the ship coming over from America. Certainly that's the man!"

Old John Quincy recognized him, but young John Quincy, in the coach's dark interior, didn't know he was back there. Squeezed back on the hard, jolting cushions, young John Quincy was trying to doze.

"I never dreamed he was on that coach!" old John Quincy gasped. And then he noticed something else. He had a full-view look at the gambler's face, and the man's eyes were a light, hard green and strangely piercing, very like Percy's one eye.

"Watch," said the Emigration Official. "See what they're doing now."

What Falcon and his companion were doing was at first hard to make out because the scene was veiled in gloaming, but it all came clear on the screen. Falcon had out a knife. His companion was struggling to untie the straps of a cowhide trunk. The guard leaned down to help.

"You're sure it's the right trunk? the gambler panted up.

"Sure," from the guard. "There's 'is initials—J.Q.A."

"I wouldn't want to make a mistake," Falcon scowled. "We had to kill that woodchopper before he'd let us hide in his cottage. We've got to work fast now, and this is our last chance."

"That's the luggage he's carryin'." The guard kept a cautionary eye on the driver. He bent down. "It's the Yankee you're after, ayn't it? Bloke named Adams? Well, 'ee's right inside the coach."

Falcon nodded. "Good work, old chappie. Aboard ship it was too dangerous. This time we can't miss."

Knife in teeth, he began to climb to the top of the coach.

"Pass me the blade," called the one below. "I'll 'ave to cut these straps. 'Is luggage is locked an' hogtied."

"Don't lose that trunk," Falcon cursed, transferring the blade. "When you cut it loose, jump with it to the road. I'll come back and meet you. He's probably carrying what we want in his pocket, but we'll have his baggage, too." He swung himself lightly up beside the guard.

"Let me handle the driver," the guard advised. "If they ever learn I'm in on this I'll be 'anged in Old Bailey before Whitsuntide. 'Ave we got to kill this 'ere Yankee?"

"Dead men don't call out the police," Falcon said coolly. "I'll take care of the American. You shoot the driver. Grab the reins and stop fast, understand? I'll swing down over the whiffletree, and it'll look like an ordinary holdup. I've got to call out the Yankee and search him, and he'll frisk a lot easier if I put a bullet in his head.

"Minute I shoot him, you whip up the horses and make off. After-



ward you'll say you were trying to save the other passengers and the stage was held up by Irish highwaymen. If you stop any chase, I'll double your commission."

"Better wait'll we're out of the open then." The guard spat. "There's a likely spot—those woods up ahead. Just beyond that crossroad."

Rattle of wheels on a plank bridge drowned their plotting voices; the driver, unconscious of jeopardy behind his back, cracked his whip and swore at the horses; rocking and careening, the coach raced on through lavender dusk.

On behind, the robber was sawing desperately at the luggage straps. Percy the guard, pistol in hand, began to claw his way across the coach-top toward the driver. On hands and knees, clinging savagely, for the top of that stage was likethedeck of a storm-tossed ship, Falcon followed.

"Great Jerusalem!" old John Quincy Adams blurted. "And me dozing inside there. Never once suspecting!"

"Look at the crossroads at the entrance to the woods," the Enigration Official murmured. "Look closely there in the road ahead. Do you see that pebble?"

The horses were almost on top of it when old John Quincy saw that pebble in the road. A big pebble it was, almost the size of a rock, smooth-polished and brown and possibly limestone or basalt. Maybe some child had thrown it there, or maybe it had just come there by wind and weather and the road's erosion. Where do pebbles come from, anyway? Nobody cares. Whoever notices a pebble, beyond giving it a kick?

Certainly the driver of that London stage didn't notice it. And those devils creeping up behind the driver had their minds on something else. As for the baggage-robber behind he couldn't have spied it there ahead; while those within the coach didn't know about it either.

Then everybody concerned learned about it all at once. *Wham!* That stage was going like sixty, and when one front wheel hit that pebble the whole equipage sprang into the air. *Whang-bang!* what a jolt that was. For full a minute that coach was over on two wheels, swerving and careening all over the road, defying all of Newton's laws of gravity. Axles shrieked. There was a screech of iron springs. Into a roadside ditch went that stagecoach, and out of the ditch with a jounce to split the hubs, held upright only by its runaway speed.

Inside, the passengers almost brained themselves on the ceiling.

Outside, the hollering driver yanked the reins and fought to hold his horses. Somehow the guard hung on. But two dark figures went sailing off the stage—two wild figures that soared through the air like a circus

act, lit in the highway like acrobats, and went rolling tail-over-teacup in the dust. One of them got up and rabbited for the woods, but Falcon, with a broken neck, lay still. When the coach lurched around a dizzy turn and came at last on an even keel, the road to London was clear.

Some miles later the driver looked around at the guard. "W'y, Perce," he remarked, "you're w'ite as a bloody sheet."

At midnight when the London stage pulled finally into Charing Cross depot, the guard was still waxy around the gills.

"Gor'my, Mr. Adams," he blurted to the young American minister, "someone's gone an' sawed through two of yer luggage straps. Now when could some dirty thieves 'ave done a trick like that?"

CHAPTER IV Gentlemen, A Toast

OLD JOHN QUINCY ADAMS sagged back from the machine, his own gills waxy. That attempt to steal his luggage was a historic incident, already in the history books; he'd always wondered who, on that London-bound stage, had cut those baggage straps.

But the trunk had been safe, all because of a pebble he'd never seen or known about.

"The papers for Jay were in that trunk," he said thickly. "So that trans-Atlantic gambler was a British spy! If the Tories had ever got hold of those instructions it would've meant war a whole lot quicker than in 1812. America wouldn't have been ready; we wouldn't have won as we did in 1812. Stars and Stripes! I remember that devilish bouncing, but I never imagined Falcon — and that pebble —!"

The Emigration Official smiled at the Past-catcher. "Many things of one's life are never imagined," he said gently. "Speaking of the War of 1812, aren't you, Mr. Adams considered largely responsible for the peace in 1814 — the Treaty of Ghent?"

Old John Quincy snorted. "Largely responsible! I consider myself wholly responsible. The English wanted to quit fighting, but they wanted their own terms, impossible terms! Henry Clay, on our side, wanted a long war. The British were pigheaded; Clay too hot tempered; no one in our Commission knew what to do. There'd never have been any Treaty of Ghent if it hadn't been for me!"

"Look in the Past-catcher," came the soft-voiced instruction. "Your diplomatic genius did much to save the treaty, Mr. Adams. And if that treaty had failed, the United States could not have survived. But look in the Past-catcher —"

Ghent—Christmas Eve, the year 1814. The quaint old Flemish city wearing its holiday ermine of snow. Candles in windows and merry-makers in narrow streets. The low-roofed, historic house where the treaty was to be signed. Peace on Earth, good will toward men. The Past-catcher showed it all.

How well old John Quincy remembered that particular Yuletide. As the scene came into focus he saw himself as Mr. J. Q. Adams, American minister extraordinary; a scholarly, cosmopolitan gentleman of world affairs, seasoned by years of travel and long experience in European diplomacy. At forty-six he could point with pride to a reputation and service record equaled by few statesmen. The Continent had come to know Mr. J. Q. Adams.

As American minister to Prussia (where his entry to Berlin had been challenged by a stupid Prussian officer who had never heard of the United States) he had won wide respect and admiration from the German king.

His return to the United States during Jefferson's administration had been distinguished by a brilliant, if stormy, period in the Senate.

Appointed ambassador to Russia by James Madison, he had achieved great success in St. Petersburg and become a close friend of Czar Alexander.

No diplomat was better fitted to handle America's foreign affairs, and America's foreign situation was never more ticklish than in 1814. The Napoleonic Wars had battered the Continent. Europe was a jungle of suspicions, jealousies, hates. In America the War of 1812 had muddled to a stalemate with both John Bull and Uncle Sam exhausted.

But, while fending off the United States with its left hand, Great Britain had suddenly knocked out Napoleon at Waterloo with its right. The Little Corporal was a ghost in exile, but Prussia loomed as a new specter, and London, anxious to recover prestige, might try to finish off the U.S.A. during the breathing spell.

The British were only half-heartedly suing for peace, and with Wellington's army released for action, the Tory government might change its mind. If a peace treaty was to be signed, it had to be signed fast. So Mr. J. Q. Adams had been ordered post-haste from St. Petersburg to Ghent to head the American peace commission. It was the high point of his diplomatic career, and he'd never had a tougher assignment.

To begin with, the British peace commissioners sent over from London were quarrelsome. They looked down on the Americans as their

social inferiors. They were imperious and domineering. They made impossible demands. They demanded the right to fortify their side of the Canadian border, refusing to allow fortification of the American side. They demanded navigation control of the Mississippi. They proposed to erect an Indian buffer state between the U. S. and Canada. They demanded most of Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois; refused to grant fishing concessions off New foundland; insisted American must assume responsibility for the war.

At which the American peace commissioners became even more quarrelsome. They not only quarreled with the British Commissioners; they quarreled among themselves. Mr. Gallatin, senior American commissioner, was ready to throw up his hands. Mr. Bayard argued sourly with Mr. Russell. Mr. Henry Clay wanted to punch the British and everybody else in the nose and go home.

Bitterness and spleen brought the conference to a deadlock. The commissioners haggled over the treaty like dogs over a bone. Time and again it looked as if the peace commission would break up into a first-class gang battle. Words flew across the conference table like fists, and the sound of fists banging the table frightened the good people of Ghent who thought they heard guns. For six months the negotiations dragged, everyone at loggerheads. The peace commission would have blown up like a powder keg if it hadn't been for Mr. J. Q. Adams.

He, himself, had a terrible time controlling his temper, for he was quick-triggered like his father, and he hated Tory snobbery, and the effort for self-control almost burst the muscles of his face.

But he could bargain like a Yankee, and he could talk like a mesmerist, and he knew the desperate position the United States was in. Now Napoleon was beaten, the British could throw their full sea-power across the Atlantic, and the hard-pressed American army wouldn't have a chance against the iron-hardened troops of Wellington. Peace with England was the only answer, but it had to be an honorable peace, lasting and permanent. Mr. J. Q. Adams knew that.

He knew, too, that the British people were reasonable even if their government often wasn't. He knew how to handle his fellow Americans. He trusted the judgments of Mr. Gallatin and Mr. Bayard; he sized up Russell as incompetent; he knew explosive Henry Clay wanted the war to go on for personal reasons, for Clay in the Senate had been a war hawk and his reputation was at stake. And Mr. J. Q. Adams had some cards up his sleeve.

Stubbornly he argued for conciliation. He pacified Clay on one hand

and the British commissioners on the other. Somehow he held the conference together. At last it was accomplished. The dove of peace was a pretty skinny looking bird and had lost a lot of its pinfeathers, but on Christmas Eve, 1814, the treaty lay on the table waiting to be signed.

That historic scene, revealed by the Past-catcher, brought a tight lump to old John Quincy's throat. He saw himself standing by the fireplace, his face seamed with fatigue. He saw his fellow American commissioners—Gallatin and Bayard and Russell and Clay—seated about in characteristic attitudes. He saw the massive Flemish table and the expectant inkwells and the treaty waiting there in the middle of the table like a Christmas gift.

Old John Quincy looked up from the Past-catcher, bright-eyed.

"We were waiting for the British commissioners to arrive! That treaty was one of my greatest accomplishments! It ended the War of 1812, and it looks as if England and America will never break that peace!"

"One of the strongest treaties ever made," the Emigration Official acknowledged. "It will last for a long time."

"It would never have been made," old John Quincy declared, "if I hadn't held my two trump cards: Czar Alexander and the Prussian king! Great Britain was afraid of those powers and knew they were favoring America. If I hadn't made good friends with those rulers that treaty would never have been signed."

"Ah," said the voice at his shoulder. "But keep your eye on the Past-catcher, Mr. Adams. Observe how nearly that treaty *wasn't* signed."

"What?" Old John Quincy looked up aghast.

"Watch the scene," he was advised.

Well, even at the time he'd been anxious and there on the screen his anxiety showed behind his smiles. The British commissioners were late. Could something at the last minute have miscarried? Gallatin was nervous, pacing up and down. Clay was drumming the table impatiently. It was like the Englishmen to be late, gave them a sense of superiority to keep the Americans waiting.

Mr. John Quincy Adams was on edge. Besides, he was a little blue. It was Christmas Eve. His wife, Louisa, and his young son Charles Francis were in St. Petersburg. He got to thinking about them away off there in Russia, and about his father and mother in far-away America, the old homestead in Massachusetts and Yankee plum puddings and Christmas trees.

As if to calm his anxieties, then, the strains of a Christmas carol drifted into the room. Everyone listened. Outside in the snow the carolers were singing: "*Stille Nacht—Heilige Nacht—*"

John Quincy Adams felt warmed, reassured. A mankind that could write such a song could hitch its wagon to a star. He walked to the window and looked down. There were three singers in the street below, all wrapped up in overcoats, top hats and mufflers—two men and a woman with lanterns in their hands. Mr. John Quincy Adams threw down a grateful sovereign.

"Gentlemen." He wheeled about. "This is indeed a memorable Christmas. Come, let us celebrate the occasion. A bottle of something to toast the British when they arrive."

Even Henry Clay grinned, for John Quincy Adams, being Puritan by upbringing, was generally pretty sparing with the spirits. But all of them thought it a good idea to toast the British commissioners (although Clay added that Satan's grids might be more appropriate for such a toasting) and Mr. John Quincy rang at once for his servant.

Old Schiller, the servant, presently appeared; he was a melancholy fellow with a horselike face and faded blue eyes, very polite and always bowing in the manner of European servants. He had been hired to take charge of the American commissioners' household. (One of the most trying aspects of the business had been the necessity for the American diplomats to live together).

Commissioner Adams told the servant to fetch a bottle of very old Chartreuse from his private stock in the wine cellar. Sadly the servant shook his head, replying in doleful Flemish that all the Chartreuse—the last choice bottle—had disappeared.

"You will recall that I spoke to you about it, Mynheer Adams. During the six months you have been quartered here, someone has been stealing your wine."

Mr. J. Q. Adams almost lost his temper about that. In the long fight with the peace commissioners, he hadn't been able to bother with petty thievery. Now this seemed as big an outrage as the British trying to steal Wisconsin.

"That rare Chartreuse has all been stolen? I'd like to get my hands on the thief!"

"I've been missing champagne right along," Gallatin put in.

"Not a drop of wine in the pantry." Henry Clay glowered. "I used up my last bottle last night. I thought you chaps would have a holiday

supply. They don't deserve better, but we can't offer these Englishmen beer."

Mr. John Quincy Adams was choleric. No wine on Christmas Eve! But he couldn't blame poor Schiller if the scullery boy or someone was light-fingered.

"Here," he offered the servant a handful of bills. "Buy a bottle of the oldest Chartreuse you can find in Ghent. And get it back here in jig time."

"But there is no one to send to the wine shop, *myntheer*," the servant mourned. "The cook has gone to a Christmas mass. The stable boy is at a party. If I go there will be no one to attend the door. I can send one of the carolers in the street if—"

"No matter who you send," John Quincy Adams gestured, impatient. "Have that Chartreuse fetched in a hurry."

Then the scene shifted to the street door where Schiller was beckoning to the carolers, asking if they would run an errand. At promise of a tip all three were more than willing. Off they hustled down the street, heads bowed to the blowing snow.

Turning a corner, they hurried for a wine shop not far from the Hotel des Pays-Bas. At the entry of the wine shop they paused together in confab. The scene showed a close-up of those Christmas carolers, and old John Quincy gasped when he saw in the Past-catcher the faces of that trio.

Their singing had been angelic, but those faces, unmulled, rivaled anything in a rogues' gallery. Close-up of the tenor showed a hook-nosed, curly-haired dwarf, as ugly as the Hunchback of Notre Dame. No less hideous was the baritone, his features scarred by smallpox. As for the woman, she was beautiful; but it was the sinister, cold beauty of a leopardess. These were evil faces, and to old John Quincy they seemed inhuman and yet familiar, for the eyes of each were a piercing, unnatural green.

"It is up to Little Francois," the leopard woman was whispering in French. She gave the dwarf's hump an affectionate pat. "You are the leader, *mon petit*. The Tomcat and I will agree to anything you say."

"Ah, *oui*," agreed the Tomcat, he of the scarred face. "You are the brains of this party, Little Francois. Myself and Marie are but the arms and legs."

The humpback nodded appreciatively. "Leave it to me," he snarled. "I know you would like to use your garrote, Tomcat, and Marie is such an expert at throwing darts that it is a shame not to use her talent. But

Santa Claus has provided us with a better way. *Sacre Dieu!* No risk to us at all, and we can kill all those birds with one stone."

"*Parbleu!*" the Tomcat exclaimed. "All at once?"

"I told you," Marie declared. "Little Francois is a genius."

The humpbacked dwarf sneered. "Do you think I am the highest paid assassin of all France for nothing? Listen, then. I have thought it all out. Do you not see the possibilities in this bottle?"

"I see nothing but snowflakes," the Tomcat blinked.

Frowning, the dwarf held up his lantern. "Attend, comedian! It is as simple as two times two. We will deliver this sacred bottle but when we deliver it there will be more than Chartreuse in the bottle."

The Tomcat let his mouth fall open. Marie gave a high, tinkling laugh. Little Francois pointed a finger. "That apothecary shop over yonder, that is our next stop. A little cyanide, perhaps. A pinch of laudanum. I have a recipe used in chocolates by Lucretia Borgia. After which," he looked up piously, "I think the heavenly choir can sing the carols to our happy peace commissioners."

Old John Quincy Adams clenched his fists when he heard that speech in the Past-catcher. "Damnation!" he choked out. "They're putting poison in that bottle of Chartreuse—that bottle we were going to drink before signing the treaty!"

He saw the trio buy Chartreuse and then cross to the druggist's establishment. Saw them come smiling out of the drug shop and go down an unlighted alley where they doctored the fatal bottle. They were singing an anthem as they returned arm in arm up the snowy Flemish street—three jolly Christmas carolers handing a bottle of Chartreuse in at the American commissioners' door. Looking up at the lighted window, they caroled to the inmates in English.

"*God rest ye merry, Gentlemen, let nothing you dismay—*"

Perspiration broke like oyster-sweat on old John Quincy's forehead as he saw Schiller accept the deadly bottle. Schiller closed the door; and the three Christmas carolers drifted off down the street with the snowflakes, as the three British commissioners arrived.

Old John Quincy watched, horrified.

He saw Schiller admit the British commissioners—pompous Lord Gamvier and that stuffy little doctor who wrote books and that exasperating popinjay, Mr. Goulburn.

He saw himself welcoming the Englishmen to the conference room. "Gentlemen, this is a historic occasion."

"Quite Quite. His Majesty's Government is prepared to sign—"

"May it be a lasting peace between our nations, gentlemen. Let us propose a toast to that effect. Mr. Clay, will you ring for Schiller?"

How could Commissioner John Quincy Adams have suspected? In that upstairs conference room, seated about the table with the others, he fingered his pen lightheartedly and chatted cheerfully to Lord Gambier and wondered why the servant didn't hurry. And presently he heard Schiller coming up the stairs. The footsteps were slow in coming; the old stairs creaked; the servant seemed to be taking an unconscionable long time.

"What," he wondered to himself, "is the matter with that man?"

Then the door at room's end opened, and Schiller was there. He was breathing heavily; in the candlelight his features were pale; he seemed to have difficulty balancing tray and glasses and uncorked Chartreuse bottle.

Commissioner Adams hurried to the servant, backed him out into the hall and closed the door. "Schiller!" he snapped, peering into the man's yellowed face, "you're drunk."

"No," the servant answered. "Sick!" With that, in the hall's dimness, he staggered; fell flat across the stair-head. John Quincy Adams jumped too late. Crash went the tray and glasses. *Bumpety-bump-bump bump*—that was the Chartreuse bottle clattering down the stairs, emptying itself.

It had seemed a bad omen for the peace treaty at the time—too ominous to be mentioned in letters and notes. But just as the bottle broke to pieces on the bottom step, the cook entered the front door. It was that good Flenish lady who hurried off to fetch the doctor and returned by way of the wine shop to buy another bottle of Christmas cheer.

The scene faded when, having toasted their governments all around, the peace commissioners reached for their pens to sign the Treaty of Ghent.

CHAPTER V Mr. Secretary Takes The Air

OLD JOHN QUINCY ADAMS felt ill at the fade-out of that scene. As ill as he'd ever felt in his life. He swung around from the Past-catcher and loosened his collar with a finger, and his lips were trembling.

"So that's what happened to that servant," he said huskily. "That's why he collapsed! I remember how he fell over that night. The doctor took him away and he never came back afterward, and I—I thought he was just sick. But he was poisoned! It was *he*—Schiller, himself—

who'd been robbing the wine cellar. He took a nip of that poisoned Chartreuse! Good Godfrey! If he hadn't, it would have killed us all!"

"Yes," said the Emigration Official quietly. "You'd have died."

"And the peace treaty wouldn't have been signed," old John Quincy cried. "The war would have gone on. Wellington would have hurled his troops across the Atlantic. England and America might be at each other throats today! That's what those French agents wanted. They wanted to bring back Napoleon, wanted England and America to batter each other to exhaustion. Those assassins were hired to kill us and stop that treaty. I see it all now."

"The Past-catcher reveals everything," was the low-voiced response. "It shows what happened and what *nearly* happened. In every man's life there are things that nearly happened—things of which he never dreamed. Those three French killers were following you, Mr. Adams, every hour of the six months you were there in Ghent. From the moment peace was decided upon your life was in jeopardy."

Prickles crawled on old John Quincy's bald-spot. "By heaven!" he swore. "If I'd known!"

The Emigration Official shook his head. "Behind every happening in the life of a man are the unknown things that nearly happened. What man, as he turns a corner, knows what lies at that moment ahead or what goes on behind his back? He turns to the right and, all unaware, avoids the accident which might have happened at the left. Or, turning to the left, he side-steps, all unknown, some misfortunate pitfall at the right. The Past-catcher, being four dimensional, shows all. Let us see what nearly happened while you were Secretary of State."

"While I was Secretary of State?" old John Quincy cried.

"In the Cabinet of James Monroe," The Emigration Official nodded. "You had won high honors in Europe, Mr. Adams, and when you returned with your family to the United States you were President Monroe's first choice for the highest post in his Cabinet. Look, Mr. Adams." The official adjusted a dial. "The year is now 1820. You will see yourself in Washington, D. C."

Washington in the spring! Ah, solitly as May itself it came into focus on the television-like screen—the town, misty with a Sunday morning sunlight and decked in fresh greenery that cloaked the rawness of unpainted buildings, the shabbiness of the negro quarter, the dirt and dust of unpaved streets, the piles of lumber and masonry and helter-skelter aspect of a new boom town.

Burnt by the British during the War of 1812, Capitol and White House were still a-building. Everywhere wooden frameworks were going up. The American capital in 1820 was young, raw-boned, taking root. White boulevards, parks and national monuments were yet to come. But magnolias and wild flowers blossomed everywhere, and in the surrounding forests there were birds singing.

A carriage was coming down Pennsylvania Avenue; Secretary of State John Quincy Adams with his wife and young sons were to be seen enjoying their Sunday morning drive. It was seven o'clock and dewy in the morning, but that wasn't early in an era when families breakfasted at five-thirty and church began at half past seven.

But Secretary of State Adams wasn't going to church. There was no Unitarian service in town; besides, although he was a rigid man of principle, he was pretty much a free-thinker like his father and preferred to say his own prayers. A Sunday morning drive through the woods down to the Potomac could be worshipful, too.

"What a lovely drive it is," Louisa was delighted. "I'm so happy here in Washington."

Secretary of State Adams, jotting notes on the back of an envelope, looked up. "No finer city anywhere in the spring," he assured his wife. "It's going to grow, Louisa. Just as the United States is going to grow. Some day it'll be the most important city in the world."

Mr. John Quincy Adams felt fine that morning. How good it was to be in America with his wife and boys. Just to be an American citizen, out of the stale, decaying atmosphere of Europe, made him want to expand. Europe was like an old and November-blighted forest; America was like a promise of spring. Democracy would grow strong and healthy and tall. To know he had an important part in building the great Republic filled him with a glow of pride.

And what American had more reason to be proud? Even his political enemies had to acknowledge his supremacy in the State Department. No one in Washington was doing a better job, and the State Department was a mighty tough job under James Monroe.

People were calling it the Era of Good Feeling, but if there was any good feeling around, John Quincy Adams wasn't aware of it. His job had been thorny as a briar patch. There'd been that squabble with Great Britain over the Columbia River, and that ticklish dicker with Russia over the Pacific Coast. Then he'd had to purchase Florida from Spain, and buying Florida real estate from a Spaniard was as risky as going blindfold to a horse trade.

He'd done a fine piece of work, buying Florida for the United States, and meantime he'd accomplished a lot of exacting little odd jobs like holding his temper in the Cabinet and establishing the Bureau of Weights and Measures. And now he was putting over the biggest job of statecraft so far in his career. He was dealing an all-time death blow to the ambitions of the Holy Alliance.

He told Louisa about it as the carriage promenaded under the shade trees.

Things had been happening since he'd been Secretary of State. The natives of Central and South America, revolting against intolerable tyranny, had broken away from Spanish domination and set up republics of their own. The Spanish people themselves were fighting against the king. Italy, too, was in bloody revolution.

All over Europe the people were crying for democracy, striving to throw off the monarchs who held them down. The right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — all over the world those ideals were on the march.

The kings were scared. They saw that democracy in America was a big success. They hugged their money-bags and clutched their tottering thrones and put their heads together. "Democracy," they decided, "must be smashed. If it smashed in America it will die out forever. The first step is to reconquer for Spain the colonies in South and Central America."

So they said a lot of hypocritical prayers and formed a sanctimonious league called the Holy Alliance. Top dogs of this crew were the emperor of Austria, the emperor of Prussia and the czar of Russia, once friendly toward America but now inspired by Prince Meternich to seize world domination. Save for England and Turkey, all the other powers in Europe rushed to get on the bandwagon. They pledged to stand by the divine right of kings, to stamp out democracy in Europe and recapture South America for the king of Spain.

"Do you see what that would mean?" John Quincy Adams asked his wife. "Huge European armies in South America, the Caribbean, Mexico. The United States constantly threatened. Little by little our Republic would be undermined. It's an insidious plot to end all representative government."

"Goodness!" Louisa said breathlessly. "Isn't that terribly dangerous for our country?"

"Dangerous!" John Quincy Adams snapped. "It's the worst threat our nation ever had. Luckily the British people won't have anything to do with that gang. But they're powerful enough as it is. If they ever get

a foothold in South America they'll be on top of us like a pack of wolves. James Monroe turned pale when he heard about it, I tell you."

"And what's President Monroe going to do about it?" Louisa asked.

"It's up to the State Department," John Quincy Adams explained, "and he's left most of it up to me."

"What are you going to do about it, Pop?" young Charles Francis asked.

"I'm going to do plenty," John Quincy Adams said, square-jawed. "I'm working on it now, and I'm almost finished. The President will get the credit for it, but I'm responsible for it, if I do say so. You'll hear about it when it goes through."

He smiled, thinking it over, as the carriage trundled under the shade trees. He'd concocted a scheme to scotch that Holy Alliance, all right. A few days more and the plan would be made public. He must work on it later this morning.

He consulted his watch. "Better hurry it a little," he called to Antoine who was driving the landau. "We are twenty-one seconds behind time. I must be punctual today."

Antoine flicked his whip, promising to make the routine drive on the dot. So many minutes in the woods. So many to the Potomac Bridge. Across the river and back home on the very tick. John Quincy Adams did everything exactly to schedule. People in Washington often set their clocks by the comings and goings of John Quincy Adams.

And that very Sunday morning someone was setting a clock by Mr. John Quincy Adams. It wasn't a grandfather clock or a coo-coo clock, but a most extraordinary clock all fitted up with wires and gadgets and springs, and when it went off it said something a whole lot louder than coo-coo.

The youth who was setting it was extraordinary, too. Thin, Pasty-skinned. Black-browed, smooth black hair. In the close-up shown by the Past-catcher he had the face of a male Mona Lisa, the same inscrutable smile, and his dapper hands, setting the clock, were slim and white as a woman's. But his eyes were not Mona Lisa's; they were a light green, and somehow they made him seem the unreal creature of a dream.

As he came into focus on the television screen, he was crouched down behind a thicket of willows near the Potomac River bridge, watching the road with his beady eyes and fixing the strange-looking clock.

"Buono!" he whispered, as Secretary of State Adams' carriage came in sight. "As usual! He is right on time."

Secretary of State Adams, crossing the bridge with his wife and sons

in the carriage, didn't see that queer figure in the willows. But the Past-catcher showed him very clearly, and old John Quincy, riveted to the eyepiece, cried out in fear.

"What's he doing? What's that queer clock in his hand?"

The picture on the screen supplied the answer. As the carriage passed out of view, the lurking figure darted out of the willows, slipped stealthily down the river bank, and ducked under the wooden bridge.

"Five minutes," he murmured. "In exactly five minutes the carriage will be coming back. *Por Dios!* this is one Sunday he will not be home on time. As my name is El Bomba!"

Old John Quincy rocked back from the Past-catcher, horror-stricken. "El Bomba!" he gasped. "That's the notorious assassin who was deported from South America. He'd been hired by the Spanish king to murder Simon Bolivar, the Liberator. I never knew he was in Washington!"

"Listen," murmured the Emigration Official.

Old John Quincy listened. The youth was planting that funny-looking clock under the bridgehead. Then, quick as a ferret, he raced out from under the bridge and sped off into the underbrush. The view on the screen was peaceful. Blue sky and puffy white clouds and the Potomac placid across the landscape. Only one sound disturbed the Maytime scene—a faint, thin *tick-tock* from under the wooden bridge.

"He's planted a bomb!" old John Quincy moaned. "An infernal machine!"

Tick-tock, tick-tock, he could hear it plainly, the ticking magnified by the early morning hush. Then a new sound came into the scene. The *clop-clop-clop* of horses' hoofs. The carriage was returning.

"Help!" old John Quincy cried out in spite of himself. "My wife and boys are with me in that carriage. We're going to be blown to pieces!"

He gripped the Past-catcher as if trying to shut off the picture, but there was no stopping the past. Closer and closer came the carriage to that ticking infernal-machine. Old John Quincy watched in a paralysis of fascination. What had happened? What *could* have happened?

Then all at once there was an explosion. It happened before the carriage returned into view, and it wasn't under the bridge but in the sky. *Slam-bang!* A crack of thunder! Then, *whoosh!* Like that. A rainstorm! A torrent! One of those springtime cloudbursts that rush from the blue without warning and ruin ladies' Sunday hats.

How it rained! Landscape, river and bridge were almost washed right out of the picture. The scene was inundated; the Potomac flooding its banks on the screen.

Old John Quincy Adams yelled as the carriage came into view, and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, in the carriage, was yelling too. He was shouting at the driver not to spare the horses. The open landau was like a chip in a deluge; poor Louisa had her shawl over her head, and the boys were huddled under the drenching, and Antoine was whipping the team.

"The bridge! The bridge!" Secretary of State Adams' yells were almost smothered by the downpour. "Hurry up, Antoine! The waters are rising—the span isn't safe."

"Not safe!" old John Quincy groaned, echoing his own cries from long ago. "My God! And I was in a hurry to get there. If I'd ever guessed!"

But he hadn't guessed. He'd spurred the driver to top speed. The bridge was shaky, low to the river, a temporary makeshift span to be replaced when the government had more time. Already the foaming flood was licking the understructure. Waves lapping up through the boards. And the bridge was long. In the picture it seemed to stretch for miles.

In a cloud of water the carriage was coming across. The long span trembled under the hoofbeats and flying wheels. Just as the carriage reached the bridgehead the river poured across the span. Then, abruptly as it had started, the rainstorm was over. The flood stood level with the bridge. Sunshine broke through the sky. The broke through the sky. The carriage was safe on solid ground, vanishing in a shower of mud on its way back to town.

As the picture faded out in the Past-catcher there was only the sound of water lapping the bridge-boards and foliage dripping.

CHAPTER VI Two Shadows Unseen

OLD JOHN QUINCY'S FACE at the eyepiece was ashen. He could barely manage to whisper. "It didn't go off! Flooded! The water rose under the bridge and the mechanism was flooded!"

The Emigration Official said nothing.

"And I was angry about that cloudburst," old John Quincy whispered. "I remember now. It ruined Louisa's new dress—soaked us all to the skin. I remember being furious at the time."

"Into each life some rain must fall," the Emigration Official reminded.

"But that bridge might've been blown to matchwood!" Old John Quincy's voice scaled up off-key. "My wife—my sons—that fiend El Bomba would have killed us all. He—great Lord!—he was an agent of the Holy Alliance!" The old man's features hardened fiercely at the realization. "If he was working for the king of Spain, he was hired by the Holy Alliance! A plot against our government! They were trying to stop me!"

That job he was doing for James Monroe. To make the Western Hemisphere safe for democracy. Saved by a rainstorm! It made his blood run cold. And now, staring at the Past-catcher, old John Quincy experienced a sensation of fear, a haunting uneasiness, a sudden anxiety about something that he couldn't put his finger on. Just what it was he couldn't explain, but it had to do with the Past-catcher—some episode in his past—some event not as yet revealed—something he couldn't remember.

Fascinated, he stared into that picture machine. That secretary of state episode wasn't quite over. Twice more El Bomba the Spaniard tried to assassinate him. The second time the bomb was planted under a watermelon in the Botanical Garden where he was making some of his famous horticultural experiments. The bomb was a dud.

The last attempt was on the night before he finished the last draft of his job for James Monroe. John Quincy Adams was an expert billiard player, and the night before that draft was completed, he dropped into the only billiard table, arriving on customary schedule for an hour of relaxation.

There was quite a crowd and he was cueing brilliantly, but he wouldn't have cued as brilliantly had he known that El Bomba, the notorious Spanish assassin, was in the crowd. Old John Quincy groaned when the Past-catcher showed that vicious face among the spectators. Secretary of State John Quincy didn't even look up from the table. He was clicking off a run, maneuvering the little ivory balls with the dexterity of a professional. Applause burst through the cigar smoke as he ran the score to ninety-nine.

Among the spectators was John C. Calhoun. "Bet you five dollars, Mr. Adams," he called as the secretary of state paused to chalk his cue. "Five dollars you can't score a hundred."

"Done." Secretary of State Adams smiled confidently. He hadn't missed a shot all evening, and he was feeling in rare form. "I'll give you two to one, sir, and it's my last shot of the evening, after which I'll take your

money and go home. The State Department's making a world-wide announcement tomorrow."

Instantly everyone was wagering; money changing hands. Secretary of State Adams took a long time chalking his cue, smiling around to make it impressive. Nobody noticed the youth with the Mona Lisa face. Everyone was staring at Calhoun and Mr. J. Q. Adams. So the Spaniard got away with it, quick as lightning with sleight-of-hand.

Leaning against the table, he substituted one white ball for another ball so fast it was hardly visible in the Past-catcher. And there was dynamite in that substituted billiard ball. Enough high explosive to take off the roof. Kiss it, and that tavern would be blown to atoms.

And there was Secretary of State Adams aiming at it deliberately. Calculating the distance. Planning with all his skill to hit it with a carom shot. The Past-catcher showed everything. It showed what was in that ivory ball; it showed El Bomba sneaking quickly out of the crowd; it showed the onlookers watching breathless and John Quincy Adams letting fly with the cue.

"Click—the cue ball raced across the green table. Click—it hit ball Number One. There was a second while the two caromming balls made geometric patterns on the cloth; then a cry from the secretary of state. Between the cue ball and that fatal third you couldn't have put a hair.

"Missed!"

Hanging up his cue, Secretary of State Adams stamped out of the building; the proprietor turned out the lights; El Bomba sneaked back to salvage the unexploded high explosive; and next morning the powers of Europe were told to keep out of the Americas and stay out. That was the Monroe Doctrine.

Saved by a rainstorm—a dud—a faulty billiard shot! Well, the history books would never know that. But there are lots of angles the history books don't know—the secrets that never came out—the happenings around the corners—the million things we don't know about which make up the million things we do.

Old John Quincy, at the eyepiece of that Past-catcher, learned such things. That machine went on. Red after red it reviewed the past events of his life, and went on behind the scene, so to speak, of those past events. And what went on behind the scene was plenty.

Take that year of 1824. He was being followed. He never knew at the time he was being followed because those spies who trailed him were careful to keep it a secret. How can anyone know that they're

being followed in secret? If the spy is caught it isn't a secret any more.

But lot of spies have never been caught. Think of all the people in history who must have been trailed by spies at one time or another but never knew it because those secret agents were never apprehended. Historians can't let such cats out of the bag; they don't know about them. But that Past-catcher showed a pair of spies trailing John Quincy Adams in 1824, and those two secret agents were so secretive they almost evaded the Past-catcher.

Their names were Commodore Breed and Mrs. Jammer. The Commodore was a gross, swaggering, red-faced Navy deserter, covered with tattooing and flogging scars. He had a drawl as soft as Georgia and the soul of a spider. Mrs. Jammer was a big blonde German woman, built like a Percheron horse, and with fewer morals.

They lived in a secluded shack on the outskirts of Washington, and they had orders from certain parties not to let John Quincy Adams out of their sight. Mrs. Jammer would trail the quarry; then the Commodore would take up the job where the woman left off. Day and night they were on his heels, and, glaring into the Past-catcher, old John Quincy watched these shenanigans dumbfounded. Probably it was his outraged amazement that kept him from noticing the eyes of these two spies—the similar green eyes.

"Sweet Land of Liberty!" he exploded. "Those two hounding me in Washington like that! By thunder, if I'd ever known!"

Why, a dozen times he passed Mrs. Jammer on the street without so much as giving her a glance. Once, skidding on a muddy corner, his carriage almost ran over the Commodore on Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Great Godfrey! If I'd ever suspected that villain was after me—!"

But he hadn't suspected. No one in Washington suspected. The town, in 1824, was jammed with all manner of strange people. Taverns and boarding houses were lilled to overflowing. Foreign diplomats rubbed elbows with uncouth frontiersmen. Soldiers, Indians, politicians, gamblers thronged the mud streets. Roustabouts, slave-traders, office seekers and Virginia gentlemen swarmed in the capital. There was no organized police force, no lights at night; no indoor plumbing. The town was wildly excited. No one thought of anything except the presidential election.

No one was more excited about it than John Quincy Adams. James Monroe was retiring to be the last of the so-called Virginia Dynasty, and John Quincy Adams was picked to run as Monroe's successor. It

was a violent campaign, for Mr. Adams' opponents were Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay.

As Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams had defended Jackson's reckless invasion of Spanish Florida; now Jackson, tricked by politicians into believing the opposite, attacked John Quincy with stinging denouncements. Clay was no mean opponent, either. John Quincy Adams had his first real taste of bitter politics in the mud-slinging contest that followed. He was accused of blundering in Europe. Bungling the Treaty of Ghent. Southern papers called him a snob. Newspapers in Philadelphia said he was a public disgrace who never wore a cravat and went to church in his bare feet.

The race was close; the candidates coming down the home stretch neck and neck. Jackson got the most electoral votes; failed to gain the necessary majority. The vote went to the House, and John Quincy Adams was elected President. The nation, the capital and Andrew Jackson went wild. Months of uproar and excitement followed; in the hurlyburly of politics and argument, no one noticed the pair from that shack on the edge of town.

President of the United States, John Quincy Adams had too many open enemies to imagine a couple more. His inaugural speech wasn't out of his mouth before the politicians attacked him. He advocated a vast scheme of public and social improvements; and there ought to be colleges built as well as roads and canals; suggested the government ought to back free education, put up astronomical observatories, explore the West and do something about the darkening slave question.

"Impractical!" howled the politicians. "Dreamer!" shouted the editors. Jeers echoed from all over the country, especially the South; whatever he said or did thereafter, it seemed to President Adams as if the ten million people of America were after him.

His four years in the White House were as tough as any President's in history. His own party, his home state, members of his Cabinet turned against him. He was accused of fraud. Of conniving with Henry Clay. Of stirring up the slaves to near rebellion. Of bribing the House to elect him. Of going on benders. Of robbing the U. S. Treasury.

Stung to desperation, falsely maligned, he struck back at his traducers with mounting anger. He wrote of his Vice-President Calhoun as "stimulated to frenzy by success, flattery and premature advancement." He described Randolph of Virginia, one of his slanderers in the Senate, as a man of "besotted violence" who stood up in the House,

drunk, "to revile the absent and the present, the living and the dead." He deplored the narrow-mindedness of New England and the hypocrisy of the slave-holding South.

The death of his aged father up in Massachusetts saddened him. He became depressed, tight-lipped, bitter-eyed. Deserted by friends, harried by unscrupulous foes, President John Quincy Adams was a lonely man.

But he wasn't as lonely as he thought he was. Two there were who remained always with him. He didn't know they were there, but there they were. Behind doors. Under windows. Around the corner. Back of the tree. They followed him to Cabinet meetings and official dinners, to political powwows and parades. They peeked over the wall of his Botanical garden and haunted his private life in the White House. Two unseen shadows.

It made old John Quincy shiver to know, see himself hounded like that. He swore, looking up from the Past-catcher.

"The whole town was full of rats! Those two were lost in the shuffle! Why, they walked right into a White House reception—no different from the rest of the crowd."

Yes, Mrs. Jammer and the Commodore were there at a White House reception; the Past-catcher showed them there. That was the reception where General Winfield Scott had his pocket picked of eight hundred dollars. John Quincy Adams had always wondered who had stolen the general's wallet.

"The Commodore!" old John Quincy, at the eye-piece, raged. "If Winfield Scott had only caught him! Ah, he would have sabered the cur!"

Then the Past-catcher showed another close-up of those spies. The kitchen of that shanty in the suburbs. Shutters closed and lights down. Mrs. Jammer and the Commodore, heads together over the table, plotting. Now they had new orders—the Past-catcher didn't show where those orders came from, but in that dim-lit kitchen were plain enough—orders to kill President John Quincy Adams!

"It's dangerous," the Commodore kept muttering. "It's dangerous as hell."

"*Ja woh!*" Mrs. Jammer conceded. "So I haff a plan—"

CHAPTER VII Diamonds In His Teeth

HISTORY BOOKS RECORDED the burning of the Treasury

Building. How John Quincy Adams organized a bucket brigade and himself took charge of fighting the fire. The President's courage was applauded, and spontaneous combustion was blamed. It took the Past-catcher, however, to tell the whole story. To show that the spontaneous combustion which started that blaze was in the brain of Mrs. Jammer.

That was her idea. Set fire to the Treasury and then, while all Washington rushed to the conflagration, to catch the President alone in the White House—and kill him. She never figured he'd rush out there in a fireman's hat with the Protectives, any more than she could imagine the Prussian kaiser swinging a bucket. That was when she got a lesson in American Democracy.

Historians, too, recorded the famous swimming exploits of President J. Q. Adams; but those historians (for historians don't know everything) should have looked into that Past-catcher. True, the President loved to swim and his skill was the talk of the town. But take that famous incident when his clothes were stolen. The Past-catcher's story was different from the record in the history books.

He liked to get up at 4:15 in the summer and ride from the White House down to the Potomac for a sunrise dip. Bathtubs were an unknown luxury in the Washington of those days—there wasn't a bathtub in the White House until Millard Fillmore installed one twenty-five years later—and John Quincy Adams preferred the river to a water pitcher and basin. Ordinarily his servant accompanied him swimming, but that morning Antoine stayed in bed.

Now the scene as shown in the Past-catcher was colored for old John Quincy with fond memories. A willow grove shrouded in morning mist. Sunrise, and the Potomac pink and blue. The President tethering his horse, stripping down at water's edge, soaring off the bank on a running dive. He made a perfect jackknife, hit the river in form and struck out for midstream like an athlete, churning the cool current with powerful strokes.

At this point the Past-catcher differed from the historians. Neither they nor the swimming President saw the sinister face of the Commodore, as shown on the vision screen, peering from the riverbank underbrush.

Murder almost caught the President that time. Not daring to tackle the swimmer alone, the Commodore stole John Quincy Adams clothes and raced off to fetch Mrs. Jammer, knowing the President of the United States couldn't ride back through Washington like Lady Godiva and would have to stay there in the water.

"I've got him." He burst in on Mrs. Jammer. "Stitchless! Down there in the river! His servant isn't with him, an' he can't get out. We're going in swimming with him. All we have to do is hold him under water—it'll look like he had a cramp an' was drowned. Come on!"

Goose pimples swelled on old John Quincy's skin as he saw that pair rushing cross-town through the early morning mists—to drown him. The Commodore was built like a gorilla, and Mrs. Jammer was a powerful woman.

"I remember now!" he cried, even before the final sequence. "I was stuck there in the water wondering how in Sam Hill I'd get home. I couldn't ride to the White House with nothing on—not the President! But a kid came down the river's bank. Just a freckled, barefoot boy with a fishpole—"

Yes, a boy—a ten-year old kid, who raced to a nearby farmhouse to get the President of the United States a pair of pants. Saved by a nipper and a pair of pants!

"And I always thought a tramp stole my clothes," old John Quincy groaned. "If that lad hadn't chanced to come a-fishing I'd have been drowned like a dog!"

"Yes," said the grave voice at old John Quincy's shoulder. "Or if that farmer had not had an extra pair of pants."

Now he had two more close calls there in the Potomac—famous incidents for the schoolbooks, but chronicled a little differently by that Past-catcher. There was that time he was swept around a riverbend by the current, and two toughs came after him in a rowboat in the fog, and a Navy barge scared the toughs away. Well, Mrs. Jammer and the Commodore were the toughs in that rowboat.

And that narrow escape when he was paddling across the river with Antoine and their canoe sank suddenly under them without warning, nearly drowning them both in the channel far from shore. Old John Quincy cried aloud when the Past-catcher revealed that it was the Commodore who, the night before, had cut the seams of that canoe.

"And I thought those were accidents!" old John Quincy gasped. "Accidents!"

Those episodes as shown in that Past-catcher put a coat of ice around his soul. That succession of close calls froze him to the marrow. It was terrible to know how many assassins had been after him. Worse, to think he'd never known it at the time. And once more he was haunted by that

other fear—something he couldn't identify—something that had happened and he couldn't remember. What it coming up in the Past-catcher?

The Emigration Official touched his shoulder. "Are you beginning to understand, Mr. Adams? Are you beginning to see?"

Old John Quincy's eyes glared, blood-shot. "I see, all right. I was a marked man while I was in Europe, and slated for murder while I was Secretary of State. And they wanted to kill me while I was President. Jumping Jehoshaphat!"

He put a dilated eyeball to the eye-piece. The scene was Mrs. Jammer's kitchen. The Commodore was advising her to lay low for a while—give the President a chance to get over his fright—catch him off guard.

"But I was never frightened!" old John Quincy panted. "In all that time I was never *on* guard!"

Twice more the German woman and the Commodore tried to kill him. The Commodore had a plan to shanghai him on an African slaver, but the crew got drunk on the appointed night and shanghaied a Boston carpet-bag salesman by mistake. Then, during his second Presidential campaign, he was sniped at while making a speech. Fourth of July. He was standing on an outdoors platform. Firecrackers were banging. No one heard Mrs. Jammer's pistol. A chance reach for a glass of water saved him. He never heard the bullet go by.

What a campaign that was! One of the foulest exhibitions of below-the-belt politics in American history. Both candidates were smeared: Soured by previous defeat, Andrew Jackson hated John Quincy Adams with all the venom of an Indian fighter for a man he considered a New England bluenose. Adams thought of Jackson as a swaggery, tobacco-chewing wildman, an unlettered demagogue and whoopla public hero.

Jackson's marriage was dragged in the mud; his wife's name publicly sullied; he was called a murderer. John Quincy Adams was called a drunkard, a grafter and a libertine. The story was passed around that while he was ambassador to Russia he had ruined a beautiful young girl and sold her to a Slavic nobleman.

Neither candidate was responsible for the dirt that was flung, but each blamed the other. The nation shook with passion and prejudice. Old John Quincy was glad when the Past-catcher finished with that unsavory chapter in American history. He saw Andy Jackson elected President; saw himself returning to Massachusetts in galling defeat.

He was glad when the scene went on to 1831 and he saw himself going back to Washington to take a seat in Congress. He was vindicating

his honor. No other ex-President had returned to Washington after such a beating. His own father, defeated for a second term, had never set foot in the capital again. John Quincy Adams wanted to keep on serving his country.

He served it, too. Those scenes in Congress went so fast they blurred on old John Quincy's vision. Years fled swiftly through the Past-catcher. Events, episodes, incidents passed across the screen as a series of flashes. He saw himself once more in the Capitol, a solitary figure fighting for his principles. He fought for international security, for the establishment of the Smithsonian Institute, for a sounder democracy. But mostly he fought against slavery.

And that was the hardest fight of all. Harder than the work he'd done in Russia. Harder than carrying papers to Jay. Harder than the Treaty of Ghent. Than putting over the Monroe Doctrine. Than all the things he'd done as President.

For he hated slavery, but he loved the Union, and while fighting one he tried to hold together the other, and it was like trying to juggle fire and dynamite. The South hated him as one hates the rebuke of conscience. The North—his own New England—hated him as big business hates something that may interfere with money. Pacifists hated him as a trouble maker. Abolitionists hated him for compromise. The meanest issue in all American history was the slavery question, and John Quincy Adams was juggling it.

They tried to stop him. They shouted him down in Congress; shelved his petitions; at last tried to silence him by passing a law that slavery couldn't be mentioned in the House. That was the famous Gag Rule, but it didn't gag John Quincy Adams. He went right on talking, for the Constitution assured all Americans free speech. All through the 1830's he went right on talking, standing up alone to shake the House with his thunder-toned appeals for freedom. Single-handed, he carried on the fight. It was his proudest achievement—breaking the Gag Rule in that fight against slavery.

Finally they tried to gag him in another way; but John Quincy Adams never knew about it at the time. He didn't know until he saw it in the Past-catcher.

Once more Mrs. Jammer and the Commodore were on the scene, and old John Quincy learned, then, who had hired that precious pair. They were agents for a vast ring of slave traders, a syndicate of slavers engaged in the outlawed African traffic. Importation of slaves had been

made illegal, but the South was still hungry for black cargo, and that shack on the edge of Washington was a smuggler's outpost. A new face appeared in Mrs. Jammer's kitchen.

That was an evil countenance! It was icy. Blue-tinged. A nose like the beak of a bird of prey. Thin, curled moustachios, and diamonds glittering in the sharp, white teeth. And green eyes that were not human. When that portrait came into focus on the Past-catcher screen, old John Quincy cried out as if he were seeing the Devil himself.

Gaylord Rudolph the man's name was, and he was head of the secret slave syndicate, and not until that moment had old John Quincy heard of such a man. But Gaylord Rudolph had heard of John Quincy Adams. There in Mrs. Jammer's kitchen, picking his diamond-studded teeth with a gold toothpick, he was laying plans for the absolute destruction of John Quincy Adams.

"He must die!" the voice from the Past-catcher was like the whispering of a crow. **"This time we must not fail. He is ruining the slave traffic,** costing us millions. You will continue your bungling attempts to kill him; meantime I am hiring from an international spy-ring the most famous assassins of Europe. They will join us here in Washington, and we will band together in an assassination from which no man could possibly escape!"

So the Commodore and Mrs. Jammer were after him again, and that diamond-toothed devil with them—trailing him, shadowing his shadow, following his every move. In and out of doors they hounded him, waiting in ambush, hiding around corners, weaving through the warp and woof that made the pattern of his unsuspecting days. All through the latter 1830's they followed him, unbeknownst to Congressman Adams, unbeknownst to anyone but themselves.

Operating from their secret hide-out, they kept their secret well. Nor did they wait for the international assassins' league to gather. Five more times they struck at John Quincy Adams with death-plots invented in their kitchen. And each time something intervened—something unplanned, unexpected, uncalled for—like a snow slide, or a pebble, or missing a billiard shot, or reaching for a drink of water. Once it was when Congressman Adams stooped to pick a four-leaf clover, and again, when he accidentally missed a wreck-bound train.

"Do you see now," the voice at old John Quincy's shoulder murmured. "Now do you understand?"

Old John Quincy turned on the Emigration Official. "My life was

hanging by a thread," he whispered. "Ever since I was fourteen years old, there in Petrograd, my life was hanging by a thread!"

It was terrible to see how close and unknown Death had been. And it couldn't go on. Impossible for the thing to go on. Sooner or later those death-dealers must get him. Law of averages. Guns couldn't always miss; rainstorms couldn't always come along. What threads for his life to hang on!—a billiard play, a fireman's hat! Sooner or later Luck would run out of wine-bibbing servants and extra pairs of pants.

"To think my life depended on such things!" he groaned out.

The Emigration Official smiled gently. "Man's life is a journey through a myriad of unseen perils. The germ and the chance lightning bolt, the unknown heart-weakness and the shift of wind all lie in wait for the traveler, even as the ambushed animal or masked highwayman. Who knows when he is saved by a pebble or a flood? Past good and ill fortune alike the traveler walks blindfold."

"I was walking blindfold, all right!" old John Quincy cried. "Every minute there in Washington I was in jeopardy. And now—a whole gang of international assassins—they were bound to get me. How could they miss?"

He broke off with a gasp. All at once he realized what it was that had worried him, the source of that strange and growling inner fear. Something *had* happened to him there in Washington. Something—he couldn't find it in his memory—something he couldn't explain.

"Those fiends!" he whispered. "What happened? What?"

"Look into the Past-catcher," the Emigration Official said.

CHAPTER VIII Passport In Order

HE HAD GROWN OLD so imperceptibly that when he saw himself there, standing up to speak in Congress, his bald head, white pinfeathers and feebleness came to him as a shock. The House of Representatives, the flag-hung gallery, the curved rows of Congressmen blurred on his failing vision.

He didn't like the way the great gathering went silent as he rose. Veneration for his white hairs? Bah! Maybe he was eighty-one, but he could still play a good game of billiards, write with a steady enough hand and think clearly enough to give these stupid politicians and Southern hypocrites a lambasting.

He didn't want their respect; he knew then. Only a few weeks ago he had written to his son, who was entering politics, not to fear public life

with its "opposition and defeats and slanders and treachery, and above all, the fickleness of popular favor. Your father and grandfather," he wrote, "have fought their way through the world against a host of adversaries, open and close, disguised and masked, with many lukewarm and more than one or two perfidious friends." That was in a letter to his son, and now he was standing up in Congress once more to speak his mind.

And how he was going to speak it! No one knew what he was going to say; they thought him just an old man. He'd been planning this speech for a long time, its content known only to himself. Now he was going to let loose with both guns, going to shoot the works, expose the whole matter of slavery. Slavery was ruining the country; the nation must be made to see the horrible lie of human bondage in a democracy. But worse, slavery was threatening the Union. Sooner or later it meant war. Half slave, half free, America could not stand. He must cry out the danger, warn the people while there was yet time.

Perfidious friends! Adversaries disguised and masked! Old John Quincy Adams, paralyzed at the Past-catcher, watching himself stand up in the House of Representatives, gave a wail of terror. "If I'd ever known!"

For the Pastcatcher showed him something that a dim-eyed old Congressman hadn't been able to see. Two figures in the visitor's gallery: Goranoff—Goranoff, the Russian anarchist—and Mrs. Jammer. Two strollers in the outer lobby—Percy, the one-eyed stagecoach guard from London, and the hunchbacked Little Francois, the Terror of France. A lounge standing on the outside steps of the Capitol—the red-faced Commodore. And two figures hidden around the corner of the building—Gaylor Rudolph and El Bomba.

"Those killers!" Old John Quincy's throat was numb with fright. "Europe's most famous assassins! All there together!"

Seeing them close-up on that television screen was like looking into the private records of Hell. Satan, himself, couldn't have recruited as lurid a brood. Their reappearance in the Past-catcher shook old John Quincy to the core. They too had come a long way in their professions; they too were getting old. Goranoff the Russian, now shriveled, wearing glasses, his beard like dirty snow. Percy with the eye-patch, leering like an aged rat. Little Francois hunched over farther than ever. El Bomba with his Mona Lisa face gone stale. Incredible coincidence that those were the recruits Gaylord Rudolph had combed from Europe?

"Get ready!" In the gallery Mrs. Jammer had her lips to Goranoff's

ear. "When he starts to speak we go out and give the signal in the lobby. Then the Frenchman and Percy signal to those outdoors."

The Russian nodded. "All is prepared. Our colleagues signal to the Commodore, who in turn signals to those around the corner to light the fuse. *Du, du!* One ton of dynamite—a year of tunneling to get it planted—it will blow this whole House of Representatives to fragments. He escaped me once, years ago. But no snow slide will save him this time!"

"*Sehr gut!* Nor a drink of water!"

Old John Quincy, seeing that scene, was white-faced. A ton of dynamite under the floor of the House!—enough to blow the whole Capitol sky high! No pebble or fireman's hat or extra pair of pants could put a stop to that. Nothing was going to stop it. Gaylord Rudolph, around the corner of the building with El Bomba, was going to stop at nothing.

"At last," his diamond-studded teeth made a flash in the bushes as he whispered, "at last we have him. You did a fine job planting the dynamite! His anti-slavery talk is ended. Nothing under heaven can save him now!"

The scene switched to a close-up of Congress; old John Quincy saw himself getting slowly to his feet. Terror knotted his heart as he watched, for the lives of his fellow Congressmen were at stake. The Union was at stake.

"They mustn't!" old John Quincy shrieked. "My speech—the nation must be warned! If slavery continues it will mean Civil War!" He broke off, choking.

Goranoff and Mrs. Jammer were getting up to go. In the lobby, the hunchback and Percy awaited the signal. On the Capitol steps the Commodore stood lookout. Around the corner, concealed in shrubbery, El Bomba and Gaylord Rudolph had matches ready. Standing up in the hushed auditorium, Congressman John Quincy Adams opened his lips to address the Speaker of the House.

"Lookout!" old John Quincy, at the eyepiece, cried. "Speak! Speak! Oh, my God!"

What happened there in the scene was not clear to old John Quincy even as he viewed it in the Past-catcher. He saw himself start to speak, then clutch out feebly, topple backward. He was falling. The House of Representatives spun around him. Congressmen's faces blurred in pin-wheel. Hands came jumping at him.

There were frightened shouts. "Stop! Stop!" . . . "Wait, Mr. Speaker!" . . . "Help him, somebody!" . . . "Mr. Adams! Mr. Adams!"

Everything went black.

Old John Quincy looked up from the Past-catcher, panic stricken. "The picture is gone!" he cried to the Emigration Official. "Great heaven! Did they blow up the House?"

"No," was the smiling answer. "They never set off the dynamite. It will be found under the building years later by workmen who will think it must have been planted there during Lincoln's Administration."

"But my speech?" old John Quincy Adams sobbed. "My speech to save the nation?"

"No speech could have saved the nation," was the quiet answer. "The Union will stand, but the stain of slavery can be wiped out only in blood."

"But what happened?" old John Quincy whispered. "Those assassins!"

The Emigration Official tuned up a dial. "Look now, Mr. Adams."

Close-up of that shack on the edge of town. Blinds drawn, and tumult in the smoky, dim-lit kitchen. Gaylord Rudolph, pacing in rage among his hirelings. Goranoff the Russian drinking vodka in a corner. Percy slumped, cursing, at the table. Mrs. Jammer at the stove, swearing tremendous German oaths. El Bomba biting his thumbs in fury; Little Francois weeping like a hyena in a tantrum; the Commodore, red-eyed, guarding the door.

"So we don't get paid?" the Commodore's bloodshot glare brought the owner of the slave syndicate to a standstill. "After all our work—risking our necks time and again—we don't get a cent!"

Under the shiny tophot, the slaver's green eyes gleamed. "Not a cent!" His sneer swept the kitchen. "Not a penny or a centime! Your contracts called for an assassination. Was there any assassination?"

"No killing him now!" Goranoff spat. *Da*. "Cheated again!"

"*Tu Madre!*" El Bomba cursed. "Look how I got nothing for my efforts. Two bombs and a billiard ball! Now a ton of dynamite gone to waste!"

"Fools!" Little Francois was hysterical. "There in Ghent I took a thousand chances. But to come all the way to America—*smile Da!*"

"Me too!" Percy banged the table. "I risk a 'angin' in Old Bailey, an' now bein' blinked as a spy. What do I get?"

Mrs. Jammer swung around from the stove. "Me, I am just a poor woman. Not only do I cook and work my fingers to the bone for this gang, I also risk my neck to kill that old fool. Years I ha'f tried. What do I get? Nothing!"

"It ayn't fair!"

"To think that old baboon should cheat us after all!

"He made his get-away."

That kitchen resembled a cage of jungle animals as Gaylord Rudolph announced, "Well, you can all go back to your ratholes. The show is over." He might have been a ringmaster, starting for the door with a tap for the tophat and a flirt of the moustaches; even as the Commodore, red-faced, growling, squaring up to bar the threshold, might have been an unruly lion.

"Just a minute, Rudolph! Maybe the show isn't over."

The slaver stopped. "What the devil do you mean.

"That old fool Adams—I seen him writin' it many times—he kept a diary!"

"A what?"

"Mrs. Jammer and these others can tell you. He kept a diary!"

"Well, I'm damned!"

"Yeah." The Commodore nodded. "You sure are, if there's anything in it about you."

"I too," Mrs. Jammer gave a squak. "I never thought—"

Little Francois cried, "I remember seeing him writing!"

"Why, he had it with him in England!" Percy exclaimed.

Goranoff and El Bomba, popeyed, were out of their chairs.

"*Por Dios!* A day-to-day record!"

"His memoirs! If he had them in Russia—"

Gaylord Rudolph's eyes glowed in fear. "We must get those records! Now! At once!"

"Leave it to me." The Commodore grabbed the doorknob. "He won't be home at his lodgings, yet. Before anyone gets there, I'll get 'em."

"I will get them," Mrs. Jammer jumped forward. "Let me!"

"*Jamais!*" Little Francois' voice was shrill. "I must and shall have this diary."

Percy the Cockney cried, "It belongs as much to me!"

"I am more concerned!" El Bomba squalled. "I was here longer."

Goranoff thrust himself forward. "But I was first. Years ago in Russia—"

"But I'm involved with the American government," Gaylord Rudolph lashed out, "and I've more to lose than any of you. Out of my way! It's mine!" Leaping, he struck the Commodore to one side. "If you think you're going to blackmail me—"

The picture that followed almost tore the vision screen. In his

wildest nightmare, old John Quincy had never dreamed of such a fight. One rush, and that kitchen was a bloody, whirligig shambles. Little Francois knifed the Commodore from behind. El Bomba drove a dagger into Little Francois' back. Quick with a gun, Percy shot the Spaniard through the head.

Goranoff flung a kitchen fork into Percy's good eye, and in turn, Mrs. Jammer brought a meat cleaver down on Goranoff's head. Dying on the floor, the Commodore reached around behind himself to pull the knife from his shoulderblades and hurl it at Mrs. Jammer. When the smoke and blood finally drained away, there was only Gaylord Rudolph the slave master, upright, unharmed and grinning, like Mephistopholes posing among the fumes.

"And now," he whispered, "to get John Quincy Adams' diary!"

He didn't get it. Reaching for the doorknob, he slipped on the blood-soaked floor and fell throat-down on the upturned meat cleaver.

Old John Quincy leaned back from the Past-catcher, exhausted, "Murder," he whispered. "All that murder—over my diary!"

The Emigration Official nodded. "Perhaps you don't realize you wrote the most famous diary of any great man in American history."

"What did they want it for? Why?"

"They were afraid that some day it might be published. International politics—public life—a diary can be pretty revealing. And they didn't know how much you knew, Mr. Adams."

"But there was nothing about them in it," old John Quincy said. "In all those years they were after me I never knew they were there." Old John Quincy, who'd never had a guilty conscience in his life, didn't understand people with guilty consciences. There were a lot of things old John Quincy didn't understand.

He was silent a moment, pondering over something that had been troubling him. "Those spies," he said at last. "Somehow they did not look as real as the other people on the screen. And there was something alike about them—every one of them had those strange green eyes."

The Emigration Official nodded and spoke gravely. "What you saw in the Past-catcher did actually happen; but Goranoff, Little Francois and the rest were more than spies. They were symbols, you see, they were the agents of an evil fate that never befell you. That's why they did not seem quite human, and why a feature repeated in all of them. In a sense they were one and the same."

Old John Quincy was digesting that when another, more significant

thought struck him. He turned to stare at the Emigration Official. "What happened to me there when I stood up in Congress?" he asked in a whisper. "They said I made a get-away. How? There in the Capitol—what happened to me?"

But the Emigration Official only smiled. And then, looking around the Frontier Station, at the misty room, at the Past-catcher, at that pleasant but inscrutable smile, John Quincy Adams caught sight of a calendar on the wall—February 21, 1848. And he understood.

"Well!" he exclaimed.

The fog was clearing outside; he could see blue sky and sunshine and a black-striped Frontier gate, and a country beyond that he couldn't describe because the colors were unlike any he'd seen before.

"Now do you understand?" the Official asked.

"I know why I'm here," John Quincy Adams said.

"And do you still think you were a self-made man—captain of your fate—that you forged your own destiny?"

Well, John Quincy Adams wasn't the man to back down on any point like that. Maybe his legal entry to this country depended on it, but he stuck to his guns. He allowed that his life had hung by a lot of unknown threads. Maybe he had been saved by a snow-slide and a pebble, an underhand theft of wine, a sudden rainstorm.

Agreed that life was a matter of chance turnings and twistings, a contrivance of being at the right place at the right time. You might never suspect when a fireman's job saved you from falling downstairs and breaking your neck at home. Or that when you missed a train you missed a murderer hidden on that train. Or when a ton of dynamite was under the floor.

But John Quincy Adams was logical. If his own life had always been in the balance, wasn't it so with every man's? Weren't there millions of unknown factors in every man's life—things going on around him that he never dreamed of—circumstances behind the scenes, so to speak, of which he had no knowledge and no control. All lives were maneuvered by secret springs, the hidden wires of destiny ran under every house on Earth. If it was so with him, it was so with every man, John Quincy Adams argued. So in the last analysis everybody got an even break. And starting from there, that even break, every man was on his own.

"Then at the point where every man goes on his own, some men fall down and some succeed," argued John Quincy Adams. "It's still up to the man, himself. I don't mean to be arrogant, but I'm proud of what I accomplished in my life, proud of what I did for America. If I hadn't

been ambitious and industrious I wouldn't have been in Russia to be saved by a snow-slide; I wouldn't have been there at Ghent; I wouldn't have been risking my life even unknowingly as President of the United States—"

He could talk, John Quincy Adams. Not for nothing had they called him Old Man Eloquent. No man in American History ever spoke more brilliantly, and he wouldn't give up an argument to save his soul.

He didn't have to. After a while, from the corner of his eye, he saw the Frontier gate was going up.

"But I'm not entering under false pretenses," he concluded, looking the Emigration Official in the eye. "I still believe I'm a self-made man, by God!"

The Emigration Official smiled. These Americans might be asked where America came from in the first place. Even so, aspiration was preferable to hypocritical humility. "Yes, you are," he agreed gently. "By God."

It Is Written

"This was the gentlest creature that we knew . . ."

I didn't know him; we weren't even acquainted. But I read about him, and talked about him to people who *had* met him, and they confirmed the gist of what I had read.

His name was William Pratt, and I had seen him in a silent film entitled *Old Ironsides* in 1926, where George Bancroft played a lead in this story of the *U. S. Constitution* and the War of 1812, and in a talking film where John Barrymore was the star of *The Mad Genius*. If I noticed his professional name in the credits at all, it probably went in one eye and then out of the other rather quickly.

Then in 1931, this probably very fine player was a star, and, for me, the name BORIS KARLOFF would never again be forgotten, after the first film version of *Frankenstein* played in the local theater, Darien, Conn. I had not yet read the book, so I thought the movie was magnificent.

And even now, having read Mrs. Shelley's splendid novel not once but several times, and thus having little but contempt for the manner in which "Hollywood" and doubtless other sources, too, have distorted and debased a story which would make a tremendously moving and thrilling film just by following the author's story, and making only those par-

ticular types of compression which are really necessary for the different medium of presentation, seeing *Boris Karloff* in *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* has its rewards. Only twice did I see him in anything like a "straight" role, and in one of those he was waste—the part of Gaffney in *Scarface*. In the other, as Sanders, the religious fanatic in *The Lost Patrol*, his performance was masterly and entirely sympathetic—one pities this tormented soul, doomed with all the others trapped in the abandoned fort in the desert; and the final scene where he has gone off the edge entirely, and walks out of the fort holding a huge improvised cross before him, lingers in my memory. One almost believes that he will get through, for a moment, but of course he doesn't; the invisible besiegers shoot him down just as they have shot down all the others, one by one. And there was a third film I saw where he was not made up like any sort of monster—but is a most unlikeable person, the nasty, anti-semitic Baron Ledkrantz in *House of Rothschild*, one of George Arliss's most popular films.

It wasn't until later that I heard about his real name and off-stage personality, yet there was something about him in even the most gruesome of his chillers which gave the impression of warmth of heart beneath the horrific exterior. Many fine actors have portrayed hideous characters on film, both the supernatural monster type or the demonic but all-too-human type; yet it seems to me that Boris Karloff was one of the few whose loveability as a person showed through. We were gripped; we were held on the edges of the seats

and maybe we fell off at times; we had nightmares—but underneath, we knew that he was a good and gentle man.

I counted 71 film appearances in the list published in Forrest J. Ackerman's *FAMOUS MONSTERS* (#56, July 1969, dedicated to Karloff) prior to *Frankenstein*. There were 150 filmed altogether, five still to be released, starting in 1919, and a total of nine years in which he made none at all; but I doubt if many who saw him as The Monster failed to notice his credit lines afterwards. For me, his last appearance as The Monster was the best of the three, as this was not a distortion of part of the book (although *Bride of Frankenstein* comes closer to the spirit of the original novel than any of the others). I believe I did see at least one of the later films in the series, but the person behind the makeup was clearly no Karloff.

Strangely enough, the film in which I enjoyed him most was one without any supernatural aspects at all—that was when he played Mord, sidekick to Richard of Gloucester in *Tower of London*, based upon the War of Roses and Richard III, in the traditional vein. Basil Rathbone, Vincent Price, (his debut in films) and Ian Hunter gave able assistance; and the next in appreciative remembrance is the series he made as the Chinese detective, Mr. Wong. But I wouldn't want to give the impression that I didn't enjoy the monster-horror ones—of course I did!

J. A. Land writes from Kenosha, Wisconsin: "Today I was going through my collection of MOH (which is now complete except for

one issue), which I do quite often, and I came to issue #19. Whenever I go back over some of the old issues, the part I always re-read is *It Is Written*. In this particular issue, I just noticed a letter from Marie Greenberg. She was asking why the *Editor's Page*, why *The Reckoning*, etc. To me, these items are as necessary to the magazine as the name is. When I pick up a new copy of one of your magazines, this is always the first section I turn to.

"I am only 24 years old, and missed out on all the golden age of reading. I enjoy those sections of your magazine because they tell me things that I didn't know because I haven't been around long enough to find out. I first discovered many new (to me) authors by reading your comments about them. I first discovered Conan in your books, and my favorite author is Robert E. Howard. It is a thrill to find out whether the story I liked best was also liked as well by the majority of the other readers. What this is all getting down to is: Never, but never, get rid of these departments! . . . "

I well recall that in the days when I was a new reader of weird and science fiction, as well as the years following, it was always the letters department that I turned to first once I'd looked through a new issue; and when I began to get acquainted with other fans, I found that most of them did, too. That is why I've given special attention to these departments in magazines I've edited, whenever it was possible to have them.

Nonetheless, I'm aware that interests do change, so I watch the mail carefully to see if the interest in the

departments seems to be holding up. Only a very small percentage of our readers are "active", but experience over the course of nearly thirty years seems to suggest strongly that the reactions of the active readers are reasonably representative of the inactive ones. Nearly every time I get a chance to talk to an inactive reader, I find that this person (and there's more than one) confirms something which those of you who write in say, so that I can have some confidence that the opinions of the active readers are not way out in relation to the feelings of the inactive ones.

In the latter part of your letter you ask when *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES* is going to appear every month, and if we could reprint a "Gray Mouser" story by Fritz Leiber. I can only reply that there are no present grounds for bringing out either MOH or SMS more frequently; our readership grows, but not rapidly, as the fact remains that we are unable to obtain wide and steady enough exposure of the magazines on newsstands to allow for more swift increase. The Leiber series is very fine indeed, but I feel that soft cover reprint either has or soon will make these stories readily available—while there are so many others, quite unavailable, that readers keep asking for. I have a long list of requests of years' standing that still has not been exhausted.

Fred Blosser writes from West Virginia:

"Some general comments on assorted past issues of MOH:

"First of all, sincerest thanks for the new and old Robert E. Howard stories and poems that you've been

running fairly regularly in MOH since #9. The reprints have all been of uniformly high quality, and the new stories have been at least good—and some have been very good. I think another reader expressed Howard's peculiar power very well when he mentioned that while Lovecraft merely described his horrors, Howard lets his describe themselves, or words to that effect. I was rather surprised that *Dermot's Bane* rated no higher than fifth place in #17. Though rather rough—a first draft that REH never got around to revising, I imagine—it nevertheless had a power and eerie force that made the other stories in the issue pallid by comparison. The Conan novelet, *Vale of Lost Women*, was also much above average, and I must take issue with the readers who expressed doubts as to its authenticity. It seemed to me every bit Howard. Nor did I find the sexual element offensive, as some did. I've come across many so-called classics in the genre (I do not refer to de Sade or Sacher-

Masoch) that contained more crude a sexual element than VW.

"More Clark Ashton Smith, please—perhaps some of his tales of Aver-oigne. I agree with the editor that his ironic humor is more effective now than, say, the heavy-handed satire of Coblenz—or Bloch's slapstick comedy, for that matter. I especially enjoyed *The Door to Saturn* in #6. I especially admire Smith's imagination in creating outlandish denizens of other worlds and the outer dimensions, such as the loathsome being in *Testament of Atham-maus*. How about running *The Seven Geases* or *Second Interment*?

Two of the most effective horror stories I've read have been *The Brain Eaters* and *The Space-Eaters* by Frank Belknap Long. Long somehow creates a dream-like effect in his tales that have a curious disquieting affect. By the way—was the narrator's friend in *The Space-Eaters* supposed to represent Lovecraft? I noticed similarities.

Thomas Boyd, whose "*The Bibli-*



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ophile" you ran in #19 was an ex-marine who enjoyed a certain popularity as a war and historical novelist in the '20's. His name is mentioned in Andrew Turnbull's *Thomas Wolfe* (1967) as having been under contract with Scribner's along the same time as Wolfe, Hemingway, and James Boyd. He wrote the WW I novel *Through the Wheat*, an excellent semi-psychological book along the lines of Stephen Crane; it was reprinted in paperback by Award Books in 1965.

I would also like to see C. L. Moore in MOH. I came across a copy of her Gnome Press collection *Shambleu and Others* in a library and have been on the look-out for anything by her since. I recommend *Scarlet Dream* or *The Black God's Kiss*. As for Henry Kuttner, how about some of his early Lovecraftian tales, or *I, the Vampire* or *We Are the Dead*. I also enjoy his later fantasies as "Lewis Padgett," but most of them are too widely available for MOH to bother with.

I for one would like to see more weird poetry in MOH. Perhaps the editor could dip into the out-of-print *Dark of the Moon*, which contains a number of excellent poems—Long's "The Abominable Snow-Man" and "A Knight of La Mancha," Howard's "Which Will Scarcely Be Understood," and Mary Elizabeth Counselman's "Echidna" come to mind. Some of the most effective work in the domain of the macabre has been done in verse form, as witness Poe.

How about *When the Green Star Waned* by Nictzin Dyalhis, or *Lady in Grey* by Donald Wandrei? Or *Spawn of the Green Abyss* by C. Hall Thompson? Or anything by Manly

Wade Wellman? And for serials—*Skull-Face* by Howard, *The Ghost Pirates* by William Hope Hodgson, or *Thunder in the Dawn* by Kuttner would be appreciated by at least one reader. More non-fiction pieces would add a dash of color to MOH, things like J. Vernon Shea's study of Lovecraft that appeared in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* a couple of years ago. Oh, yes—some Sax Rohmer, please.

MOH has certainly showed an improvement in contents and format since the first issue. Long may it stand."

The stories that you suggest by Clark Ashton Smith are on my list, as well as various others by CAS; in fact, the question is not whether to run more Smith stories, as space permits, but which to run first. So many of you have asked for so many of his tales! . . . I should, indeed, be happy to run a number of the other stories you ask for—and you are far from the first to nominate them!—but the fact remains, alas, that some authors whom I would very much like to use in MOH are simply not available to us under present circumstances. If and when this situation changes, you will certainly see them.

In some instances, a number of readers ask for a story which I then carefully re-read, and upon re-reading decide that it really is too outdated in too many ways, and would be of interest only to a very small percentage of the readers. And very possibly, even some of those who asked for the story (having heard of it but never having read it), might be disappointed. I could, true, be mistaken; but considering

the fact that such stories are generally quite long ones, it does not seem wise to risk going against my own judgment—it's bad enough if readers do not care for a story that I considered very good; but should they confirm my opinion on a story I did not think good, that would be much more than a case of misfortune—it would be idiocy!

I do not say dogmatically that we shall *not* run any further long novels in serial form, but we shall certainly not consider doing so until we find out how *The Devil's Bride* went over, so far as circulation of the issues containing it is concerned. Many readers do not realize how long some of these fine old novels really were; I, myself, was deceived on the Quinn novel, which turned out to be considerably longer than I had estimated—it was much closer to 75,000 words than to 60,000 words in effective length. (Effective length refers to the number of lines a story actually takes to print, rather than the word count; the word count can often be a very deceptive thing.)

Alfred Jan writes from California: "I was quite disconcerted to see *The Oak Tree* and *The Sword and the Eagle* appearing in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. These two stories are of the hero-sword-sorcery type which, in my opinion, do not belong in MOH, simply because such stories are not horror stories. Moreover, since Lancer Books has released an avalanche of hero-swords-sorcery by Howard, Terl White, etc., you have all the more reason to leave this type of story out of MOH. Notice I am not objecting to Keller; his weird and horror stories are OK."

J. Gregory writes: "In re Mr. McMahon's query: I'm surprised at your not immediately recalling William Hope Hodgson's classic *Voice in the Night*. It has been anthologized quite often in recent years, and is currently available in the Arkham House reprint edition of Hodgson's shorter tales, *Deep Waters*. A fine tale, too.

"While I'm at it, some comment on recent issues. The January: only the Smith was any more than adequate, but *it* was marvelous. Your acceptance of Lafferty's work is praiseworthy no matter what your reason for taking it or his for submitting. The rest of March is negligible, with the possible exception of *The Devil's Bride*, which will have to wait until I get time, now that I have the last installment.

"The May issue offers an inferior Cave (as opposed to an outdoor Cave), an amusing piece of satire by Wollheim, another clever piece of writing by Aletti (want to see more of him), and an embarrassing space-filler by Silverberg. You were really stretching a point by including *that* in MOH. Oh yes, speaking of spreading out in editorial policy, the inclusion of these Cornwall tales is something else again. I have an idea! Why don't you take all of the chronological grouping that has been so painstakingly put together and bring them to Ballantine or Ace as something to follow Tolkien or Peake in their current best-selling fairytale-fantasy mode, if in fact it *is* book-length as you contend. I, for one, couldn't be more bored and uninterested. By no stretch of the imagination (I use that word strictly here) do the stories fit into any edi-

torial framework of the magazine since its inception, that I can remember . . ."

See the following letter for an opinion on the Cornwall stories which is representative of the majority of comments we have received thus far. I've alerted Ballantine's editor to the series, so they will be considered there, at least.

So the story was *The Voice in the Night!* That's what I get for packing away the Arkham House booksearly (we were getting ready to move to our new address at the time that I made up the last department, and I decided that I wouldn't need some of the hardcover books I have in the office)! Actually, the Hodgson story came to my mind first, but I had not bothered to re-read it before reviewing the Arkham House collection over-all, as I had confidence that it would stand up; (another sin findeth me out in mysterious ways) so I didn't want to risk confusing it with another story or stories I had read which were rather similar--and could not recall the titles of the other stories.

Eugene D. D'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook, N. Y.: "Eagerly I have waited--with baited breath if you will--for the second installment of *The Devil's Bride*. Part two, although it carried the plot line along in the usual swift Quinn-de Gran'in style, showed its padding. The lengthy descriptions of Agnes' background, though compelling and readable, seemed to be glued on to the plot-line, rather than to grow from it. The same holds true for the rather drawn-out story told by 'Hiji'. This is not so much of a complaint, however, as it is an observation. The

scene at the black mass delivered a vivid punch that I have not seen equalled in weird fiction. Something I just thought of: The whole character of Hiji, appearing in the story where he does, seems contrived. It is almost as if Mr. Quinn wrote his characters into a corner in the fire, and needed a convenient way out.

"Donald A. Wollheim's *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, despite your note that this was a 'gentle, loving spoof', was a pleasant surprise. All of my previous experience with HPL 'spoofs' are of the ilk of Ron Goulart's crude and cruel *Ralph Wallstonecraft Hedge: A Memoir*. Wollheim's piece, however, was as delightful as it was subtle. His recurrent phrase of things 'too horrible to relate' and the final hilarious 'revelation' could be part and parcel of a straight horror story to those unfamiliar with Lovecraft, as well as a good chuckle to those familiar with the Master.

"*Spawn of Inferno* was, to me, typical Cave. He takes a good-albeit worn--premise and skirts around its perimeter, occasionally peering into its depths. The case was no different here. In fact, the whole plot seems directly derived from Murray Leinster. Not aiding the story was the Nelson illustration, which crudely divulged the story's one shock . . .

"Steffan B. Aletti's latest was neither as original as *The Castle in the Window* nor as terrifying as *The Eye of Horus*. The fact remains, however, that he is the best new writer following in the vein of Lovecraft. His images are sound, his narrative smooth. Also, I cannot find 'the horrid Mnemonic Fragments' in Lin Carter's H. P. Lovecraft: *The Books*, so I must assume that Mr. Aletti

has invented them. I hope, in the future, he will reveal some of these 'Fragments' for us.

"It would be a crime against humanity not to reprint Dr. Keller's Cornwall stories *in toto*. *The Sword and the Eagle* was even more enchanting than its predecessor. Dr. Keller, with his beautiful, simple straightforwardness, runs circles around the grossly overdone Hobbitt trilogy of Tolkien, and other such modern fantasy-myth opera."

Here are two widely-diverging views upon the Cornwall series, and we received another objection to them on the grounds that they are really fairy stories, and thus have no place in MOH. (In the last issue, you recall, a reader expressed his delight at the fact that these were fairy stories, implying pleasure that our interpretation of "the bizarre" was broad enough to include them.) Thus far, however, the approval far outweighs the dislike for the series.

It's quite possible that Tolkien is being over-rated these days, which is unfortunate, as it often happens that an author treated thus in one decade will be under-rated the next, and may have to be re-discovered many years later. But one can hope that Professor Tolkien does not take his stories (the success of which was a surprise to nearly everyone) with the humorless awe that some of the Tolkien adherents take them. Personally, I found the stories charming, and really the right length—but as for literary societies and scholarly movements based upon them . . .

You must remember that *The Devil's Bride* was not only written

circa 1931, but that it was also written by an author schooled in a different tradition of fiction, where plotting, for example was seldom tight in the sense that we consider proper for plotting today. Mr. Quinn has indicated that he seldom worked out the plots of the de Grandin stories completely in advance, but rather let his story sense choose numerous details as he went along. The advantages of this way of writing are that the author can attain far more breadth of imagination and detail, if he has a well-developed talent for consistency and the ability (as well as willingness) to tie up the loose threads that will necessarily protrude. The disadvantages show themselves rather soon with the unskilled or lazy writer, and in any event there is the danger of leaving an impression of arbitrariness which we call "contrivance". Every story is contrived, of course, but the best ones manage to conceal the fact.

In the stories of the time when Quinn was writing there was often a lack of that feeling of inevitability which one can attain only by thoroughly working-out the entire story in advance—and even here, an author may fall, simply because he has not thought the implications of his plot through. My own impression with the de Grandin stories, and many others by Quinn, is that they gain in richness through what is lost in the absence of tight plotting. In too many present day stories, wherein the authors have managed to avoid lengthy digressions from the forward story-line, there is also revealed what amounts to poverty. The skilled writer like James Blish can tell a

story "trimmed to the bare bones" as he describes his novel, *Black Easter*, without starving necessary detail—but this is something that generally requires many years of apprenticeship in all kinds of writing, before an author can have the understanding of *what* to compress.

The novice attempt is more likely

to reveal want of imagination.

Unfortunately, it was necessary to prepare this department for the printer before any mail on the July issue was received; thus the absence of letters commenting upon the conclusion of the serial or on the cover.

RAWL

The Editor's Page

(continued from page 7)

The better authors in this classification have been science fiction readers and have written the more conventional sort of science fiction tales in the past. They are not mainstream authors who heard that there was a lot of money to be made writing science fiction, so who condescended to uplift what they considered at best a very lowly brand of fiction. Both the better authors and the stories worth reading in the New Wave area represent the use of various mainstream elements in fiction for the purpose of telling a story more effectively—a story which could not be told in mainstream. Mainstream fiction may have various speculative elements in it, but this is speculation about the past or the "present", as Norman Spinrad pointed out. The sort of story he said he wants to write is one which requires a different world—one

which might, indeed, be extrapolated from what we see about us today; and the particular gimmicks that may be employed are there for the purpose of producing an effect of reality, of vividness, both in physical description and emotional impact upon the reader.

In short, as Ezra Pound said about prose and poetry—that which can be done as well in prose can be done better in prose—the most thoughtful of the New Wave writers say about mainstream and science (or speculative) fiction—that which can be done as well in mainstream can be done better in mainstream; and what they seek to do is that which cannot be done in mainstream at all.

You or I may not agree with a third person on the measure of success that a particular story achieves.

Coming Next Issue

"Rashly, I went on and on with the work. And five years ago, after twenty-five years of intensive study, I learned something that I considered my crowning discovery.

"I learned that there existed a certain hitherto unheard-of chapter of the works of Cagliostro, the great Italian necromancer, which contained texts more revolutionary, more staggering to the imagination in the power they gave their possessor, than all the works of my library combined!

"I determined to get this fragment of Cagliostro's book of rituals. As I was getting old and knew there would be a long period of searching needed to uncover this rare document, I decided to hire an assistant to help me.

"Naturally I picked an assistant with a great deal of care. Such work as mine was dangerous, not only because of the risk in dealing with supernatural things, but also because of the attitude the majority of the public has in regard to such matters. Most people haven't gotten out of the old witch-burning attitude; I didn't dare take any chances of my line of endeavor being made public.

"The man I finally hired seemed ideal. He was from a famous college, extremely intelligent, quiet and self-effacing. He was a graduate physician. From the very start, he showed an interest in demonology fully as great as my own—so great, indeed, that I could not resist the temptation to teach him all I knew and have him help me in the laboratory as well as in the work of tracing that fatal lost chapter of Cagliostro's. His name was Quoy—Doctor Herbert Quoy.

"Three years went by. Twice I sent Doctor Quoy to Italy to verify rumors of the location of the document I sought. Each time he came back and reported failure to find it. Meanwhile, the student was surpassing the master! I was neither stupid nor ungifted at my chosen work; but he, it seemed, had pure genius for it. Rapidly I found my own knowledge and ability along the forbidden line of the black arts being eclipsed by his. It puzzled me that in three years of effort, he could go beyond the mark I had reached in nearly thirty years . . ."

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You or I may agree that a particular story is very successful, without particularly liking the story. Or, again, we may find a few both effective and good to our taste, without, however, wanting to read very many stories of this nature. And on the other hand, you may feel that you want to read more of this sort of story than any other particular type. It doesn't matter, really, which if any of these categories I (or any one of you) fit into at any particular time; it does matter that the area of fiction which we call fantasy and science fiction has been broadened out. And if just *one* story from what is called the New Wave produces in me the effect of a vital experience which I would not have had without this movement, then the movement is justified. I don't have to read everything in the area, nor do you; and neither of us have to read any of it unless we want to.

During the past few years, the debate on the merits (or lack of merits) both of particular stories, particular authors, and the movement itself, have been animated, intense, and sometimes acrimonious. There are extremists on both sides of the question, so that on the one hand we get the person who maintains that New Wave science fiction is the *only* sort of science fiction worth paying any attention to at all; and on the other end, the person who maintains that the movement is in itself worthless, and moreover a form of evil that ought to be stamped out. Both extremes are absurd.

But the enthusiast's position is certainly understandable. I felt that way in 1930 when I began to read science fiction regularly in *AMAZING STORIES*, *AMAZING STOR-*

IES QUARTERLY, SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, AIR WONDER STORIES, SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY, WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY, and later ASTOUNDING STORIES. This was not only great stuff—it was the greatest stuff ever! Other forms of fiction seemed pretty pale and uninteresting by comparison. And when I got on to WEIRD TALES and STRANGE TALES, then the bizarre, the gruesome, and the frightening sort of story was added to my area of intense enthusiasm.

I no longer feel quite so exclusively enthusiastic, but I certainly can appreciate the feelings of the person who does. Some enthusiasts will stay that way and happily confine their fiction reading to one area of literature. Others will tire of it entirely. Still others will maintain a permanent but not exclusive appreciation of fantasy and science fiction as I have, and as many of those of us in the field have. It isn't necessary to believe, as I did for a time in the early 30s, that science fiction puts Shakespeare into the shade; growing up included getting to see that there is room in a mature appreciation of letters for both. And there is room in a mature appreciation of fantasy and science fiction for Robert A. Heinlein, H. P. Lovecraft, Samuel R. Delany, Harlan Ellison, Frederick Pohl, James Blish, Lester del Rey, and J. G. Ballard—to list just a few writers who show considerable areas of mutual incompatibility.

I have mentioned those who are in extreme opposition to the New Wave authors as feeling that this form of fiction is an evil to be stamp-

HAVE YOU MISSED ANY OF OUR BACK ISSUES?

Here is a listing of the contents of those that were still available when this new issue was closed.

5, September 1964: *Cassius*, Henry S. Whitehead; *Love at First Sight*, J. L. Miller; *Five-Year Contract*, J. Vernon Shea; *The House of the Worm*, Merle Proug; *The Beautiful Sail*, H. G. Wells; *A Stranger Come to Reap*, Stephen Dentinger; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, Walt Liebscher; *Bones*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Ghostly Rental*, Henry James.

6, November 1964: *Caverns of Horror*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Walt Liebscher; *The Mask*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Worde*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Fracture*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Pacer*, August Derleth; *The Moth*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Saturn*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#7, January 1965: *The Thing From-Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way with Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E. B. Marriote-Watson; *The Shattered Room*, H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R. H. D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Possent*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jock*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

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#9, June 1965: *The Night Wife*, H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Stain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H. G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1955: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Modesty*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come, Joanna Russ*; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Mock-Mon*, Laurence Manning; *Was It a Dream?*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Han Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Da Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dwellers in Dark Valley* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool*, Grege la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But Not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Munching, Exorcist*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M.*, John Steinbeck; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL* (article), Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whithead;

ed out, but I do not want to give the impression that everyone who does not enjoy these stories, or dislikes some of them, is an extremist. One does not have to be violently against something simply because one is not any less violently in favor of it. The grown up opponent of this sort of fiction can state clearly why he does not favor it—and look without rancor upon those who do favor it. And even when an opponent objects strongly to extremist contentions that the New Wave is the only thing in science fiction that is worth an intelligent or cultured person's attention, this does not necessarily include a vendetta against the entire movement. Actually, the worst enemies of the New Wave are those who loudly make absurd claims for its authors.

The reason why much of the material can just as well be considered horror fiction as science fiction (and in some instances can better be considered horror fiction) is set forth in David Pringle's review of *Bug Jack Barron*, by Norman Spinrad: "... The nightmare is every bit as necessary as the sweet dream, and as psychologists tell us, it can be highly therapeutic. All science fiction is a literary dream-process. It helps to visualize modern man's hopes and fears: it creates a symbolic mythology for our times, both horrific and glorious. The two qualities are inseparable; it is the paradox of man's progress..." (*SPECULATION*, January 1969).

Yes, of course: it is the demonic aspect of human personality, of man in a highly advanced technology which has not resulted in the ideal societies which the prophets of salvation-through-scientific-progress

foretold. Science, as such, is no more the villain, the Devil, than a pistol is: it is humanity itself, most members of which want freedom without responsibility, and above all freedom from thinking, which lies at the root of the matter—just as it is the individual man or woman who loads the pistol, points it, and fires it. And this same irresponsible and thoughtless humanity is now swayed by such absurd notions as that killing off scientists or burning down universities, or passing stricter laws against the ownership of pistols, etc., will solve the problems.

But irresponsibility and thoughtlessness, which result in people trying to get away with going directly against the provisions of even those few laws of the universe we really know, is the source for horror stories—the terror of the *unknown* within man, and the most horrible part of it, that unknown which is unknown because people refuse to learn. It makes for drama and emotional impact, and in these days of the latter twentieth century, the science fiction horror story is a very legitimate way of "telling it as it is". The method is to extrapolate still farther beyond the level of easy inference from "if this goes on". The shoddy example carries it little beyond today's headlines; the well-done example employs the same methods that the masters of literature have used in the past, of visualization and speculation far beyond the level of news-commentator's easy chit-chat.

I see no reason why anyone ought to prefer this sort of science fiction, in the sense that this is so superior that everyone of intelligence and sensibility ought to—but I also see no

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#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Heredity*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Love of the Star-Spawn*, August Derleth & Mark Schorer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now the Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel deFoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Mamurth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr (Introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyev; *Mr. Octbur*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog that Laughed*, Charles Willard Dillin; *Oh, Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Laiterty; *The Leaden Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Sense of Crawling*, Robert Edmond Alter; *The Laughing Duke*, Wallace West; *Dermot's Ban*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey (Introduction by Sam Moskowitz); "Williamson", Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse of Amen-Ra*, Victor Rousseau.

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#18, November 1967: *In Amundsen's Tent*, John Martin Leshy; *Transient and Immortal*, Jim Haught; *Out of the Deep*, Robert E. Howard; *The Bibliophile*, Thomas Boyd; *The Ultimate Creature*, R. A. Lafferty; *Wolves of Darkness*, Jack Williamson.

#19, January 1968: *The Red Witch*, Nicztin, Dyalhis; *The Last Letter from Norman Underwood*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Jewels of Vishnu*, Harriet Bennett (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *The Man from Cincinnati*, Holloway Horn; *Ground Afire*, Anna Hunger; *The Wind in the Rose-Bush*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Last of Placid's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *The Years are as a Knife* (verse), Robert E. Howard.

#20, March 1968: *The Siren of the Snakes*, Arlon Eadie; *The Rack*, G. G. Ketcham; *A Cry from Beyond*, Victor Rousseau; *Only Gone Before*, Emil Petaja; *The Voice*, Nell Kay; *The Monsters*, Murray Leinster.

#21, May 1968: *Kings of the Night*, Robert E. Howard; *The Cunning of Private Rogoff*, David A. English; *The Brain-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Psychichal Invasion* (part one), Algernon Blackwood; *Nasturtia*, Col. S. P. Meek; *The Dark Star*, G. G. Pendarves.

#22, July 1968: *Worms of the Earth*, Robert E. Howard; *Come*, Anna Hunger; *They Called Him Ghost*, Laurence J. Cahill; *The Phantom Rickshaw*, Rudyard Kipling; *The Castle in the Window*, Steffan B. Aletti; *A Psychichal Invasion* (part two), Algernon Blackwood.

#23, September 1968: *The Abyss* (part one) David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Death Mask*, Mrs. H. D. Everett; *One By One*, Richard M. Hodgins; *The Thirteenth Floor*, Douglas M. Dold; *Leapers*, Robert A. W. Lowndes.

reason why first class work cannot be done in this part of the field; it's fully as legitimate as the more pleasant science fiction, which is also still being written.

There is no reason why any particular science fiction story should not also be within the area of what we call "horror"—or the strange, bizarre, etc.—and there is no reason why any particular story has to be in that area. If you look over the history of magazine science fiction, you will find a number of New Waves as it were—new approaches to science fiction which had the overall effect of expanding the area. First class work has been done in each; and the aficionado of each may have felt that this new thing was greater than that which went before, and made the old type obsolete.

The origins of Lovecraft's approach to the horror story can be found and discussed and examined; but HPL made something new out of these elements, so that his best stories are quite original.

One hears to-day (but the alert reader always heard) of aesthetic theories regarding fiction. Any aesthetic theory which helps this or that writer to understand *what* he wants to do, *why* he wants to do it, and *how* is the best way for him to go about it is a good aesthetic theory—for him. Any aesthetic theory which helps me, as a reader, to find order in a story which otherwise seems chaotic, or enjoy a story which otherwise did not give pleasure, is a good aesthetic theory—for me, or at least for this sort of story. But art is not science, so there is no such thing as a master formula either for creating or appreciating master-

pieces. Aesthetic theories are somewhat closer to engineering—so long as they work, either for the writer or the reader, or both, they're good; they do not have to be the ultimate truth or even true at all!

Like fire, drinking alcohol, etc., aesthetic theories can be good servants, but loathsome masters. The writer who expects a theory to do his work for him, so that he just has to pour ideas, etc., into a mold, in effect, has crippled himself. The reader who latches on to one particular aesthetic theory, and lets this theory, rather than his own sensibilities, pick good stories for him (and usually aesthetic theories, used in that manner, work to throw the master-works of literature into the discard and wind up elevating the least worthy—writers to show great skill in filling up the blanks in a standard form) has crippled himself.

Art, however, is *not* duty.

Readers like myself enjoy exercising critical functions, but that is no reason why you should be concerned with the age-old questions of why this story seems better than that one, this author better than that one, this type of story better than that one—or why you may prefer this story to that one, no matter who says that one is better, no matter even if intellectually you agree. The only reason why you should bother about criticism and analysis of fiction is, then, a conditional one: if such activity interests you. If it does, then criticising and reading criticism can be very rewarding. But what should be kept in mind is that the critic is not a law-enforcement officer, however excellent a critic he may be.

RAWL

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#25, January 1969: *There Shall be no Darkness*, James Blish; *The Phantom Ship*, Captain Frederick Marray; *When Dead Gods Wake*, Victor Rousseau; *The Writings of Elwin Adams*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Colossus of Ylourgne*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#26, March 1969: *The Devil's Bride* (part one), Seabury Quinn; *The Oak Tree*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Milk Carts*, Violet A. Methley; *Cliffs That Laughed*, R. A. Lallerty; *Flight*, James Bennett & Soong Kwen-Ling; *The White Dog*, Feodor Sologub.

#27, May 1969: *Spawn of Inferno*, Hugh B. Cave; *The Sword and the Eagle*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Last Work of Pietro of Apono*, Stellan B. Aletti; *At the End of Days*, Robert Silverberg; *The Devil's Bride* (part two), Seabury Quinn.

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#29, September 1969: *The Case of the Sinister Shape*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Thirty and One*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *Portraits by Jacob Pitt*, Steven Lott; *The Red Sail*, Charles Hilan Craig; *Guatemala in the Visitant*, Arthur J. Burks.

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